Boston Hist. Soc.

A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

IN WHICH THE

Distinguishing Sentiments of the Baptists

ARE EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED:

In answer to a late Publication,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL WORCESTER, A.M.

ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR, ENTITLED

"SERIOUS AND CANDID LETTERS."

BY THOMAS BALDWIN, D.D.
PASTOR OF A BAPTIST CHURCH IN BOSTON.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?.....PAUL.

4665

Boston:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY MANNING AND LORING, NO.
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from Wm. N. Shaw, Esq.
6

District of Massachusetts, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twenty-third day of August, in the thirty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, MANNING & LORING, of the said District, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following, *to wit*: "A Series of Letters. In which the distinguishing Sentiments of the Baptists are explained and vindicated: In answer to a late Publication by the Rev. SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M. addressed to the Author, entitled, "Serious and Candid Letters." By THOMAS BALDWIN, D. D. Pastor of a Baptist Church in Boston. *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*....PAUL."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

WILLIAM S. SHAW, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

Preface.

IN perusing the ensuing work, the candid reader will perceive, that the principal topics of dispute between the Baptists and Pædobaptists are brought to view, and amply discussed in these Letters.

Particularly the distinction between the first "great gospel promise," given to Abraham, (Gen. xii. 3.) *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*; and the promises contained in the covenant made with him twenty-four years after, of which circumcision was the *seal*. Also, the distinction between this covenant, and that called the "New Covenant," it is believed, is clearly supported.

It is hoped that the reader will likewise find satisfactory evidence of the *real* difference in the "visible organization" of the Jewish and Christian churches. That although religion is always the same, and believers under every dispensation are allowed in some sense to be the same, yet these churches, considered as "visibly organized bodies," are so totally distinct from each other, as to forbid the supposition that they are one.

The argument in favour of *infant baptism*, as founded on circumcision, is particularly considered in the ensuing sheets. Besides many collateral and indirect proofs, which serve to shew the fallacy of the argument, the reader is particularly desired to notice the observations on Acts xxi. 18—22, in Letter XVII. page 136.

By examining this, he will be convinced, that the believing Jews still continued to circumcise their children; hence, not at all likely that they should baptize them. And it must also be clear to demonstration, that they could not consider baptism as having taken the place of circumcision; for in that case they would have omitted the latter, and have practised the former. Or, had they have done this, they could not have blamed Paul for *teaching the Jews not to circumcise their children*, as above. Or, had Paul inculcated the baptism of infants, instead of circumcising them, he would not failed to have mentioned it on this occasion, in vindication of his own character.

Mr. Worcester's "ample proof," from the ancient fathers, will be carefully examined by the reader; and whatever he may discover in it favourable to *infant baptism*, he will conscientiously pass to his account.

Though but cursorily, the *mode* of baptism has received some consideration. The arguments and authorities quoted are few, but direct to the point; particularly those of *Calvin*, *Witsius*, and *Campbell*.

The writer of these Letters is far from thinking that the subject is exhausted. But before any further proof is called for, he hopes the arguments already advanced may be allowed their full weight. If these are duly considered, he has reason to hope that such as are desirous of finding the right way, may have their doubts removed, and their minds established in the truth.

That the enlightening influences of the Spirit of God may be afforded to the reader, while examining this feeble effort to restore the churches to apostolic purity in practice, is the earnest wish, and sincere prayer of

The public's devoted servant,

THE AUTHOR.

July 1, 1810.

SERIES OF LETTERS.

LETTER I.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR "Serious and Candid Letters" were, by your *politeness*, presented to me soon after their publication; but particular circumstances prevented my perusing them for several weeks after.

In a note addressed to you, acknowledging the receipt of your book, it was proposed at some future period to bestow that attention upon the work, which its nature and importance demanded. I thought to have resumed the subject long before this time; but the numerous calls of duty have not permitted me to give your Letters a second reading, although more than seven months have now elapsed.

During this period, however, I have often reflected, and I trust with a degree of seriousness, on the important controversy between us. At times, I have almost determined not to publish any thing more on the subject; but to state my objections to what you have advanced against my *Strictures* in a private letter. And although I have now concluded (Deo volente,) to submit my thoughts to the public, I candidly confess, it is not without a degree of reluctance that I again invite their attention to this unpleasant controversy.

To say nothing of the talents combined against me, and the disagreeable feelings which the dispute, however candidly it may be managed, will naturally produce in the minds of those who differ from me; the thought of sacrificing so much precious time, which might probably be spent to better purpose, together with the little

pect of bringing the controversy to a close, are powerful arguments against writing.

After stating these objections, you will perhaps ask, "Why then do you not sit down in silence?" I answer, —Weighty as the above reasons are, others at present outweigh them.

At a former period, influenced by these reasons, and some others which I shall presently have occasion to mention, I resolved not to reply to your Reverend Brother's "Candid Discussion," as he was pleased to call it; but finding myself blamed both by him and you for not writing, I have concluded briefly to *review* your Letters.

I am not without hopes, that what I may write, will, under the blessing of God, prove useful to some perplexed believers, in assisting them to distinguish between human tradition and Divine Institution.

My first intention, was not to have followed your track, by giving a separate answer to each Letter: but I soon perceived the impracticability of attempting to methodize your arguments, so as to be able to answer them satisfactorily in any other mode. I have therefore concluded to pursue this method.

In prosecuting my design, I hope to plead no other cause than that of truth, nor use any other weapons than those which Christian candour will approve. But in doing this, I shall not think myself obliged to preface every argument with the word "serious," nor to banish every ray of cheerfulness and pleasantry, lest the gloomy countenance of bigotry should occasionally brighten into a smile, while plodding over the rugged field of controversy.

I am sorry, Sir, to find, that you have taken such unwearied pains to make your readers believe, (and I doubt not but you have succeeded with some who have never seen my book,) that I had treated the subject of your Discourses with great *levity*. That to your "serious argument," little more had been opposed than "vulgar ridicule." Indeed, in one instance, you have gone still further, and *insinuated*, that I have been guilty of such indelicacy, that "no consideration whatever should prevail

on you to transcribe" the passage into your pages. This will be more particularly noticed in its proper place.

You are pleased to say, "Of the spirit and manner of your book, could I express myself in terms of unqualified commendation, it would certainly afford me a peculiar pleasure." You then add, "*Professions*, indeed, you have been pleased *to advance many*, and they will all, I trust, be duly appreciated." This language cannot easily be misunderstood. It may serve as a specimen of the disingenuous manner in which you have thought fit to treat me in your writings.

My general conduct towards the Pædobaptists in every period of my ministry, will be the best criterion of the sincerity of my professions respecting them. To this I cheerfully appeal. While I sacredly refrain from suggesting a suspicion of the *sincerity* of *your* "professions," I assure you, Sir, I hold in utter contempt any uncandid insinuations against *my own*.

I am not insensible, that much imperfection has attended my feeble efforts in this unpleasant controversy. But I can truly say, that it has been my constant desire and aim, while attempting to expose what I believed to be error, to do it in a candid, open, Christian manner. So far as I have failed, I have come short of my object, and injured the cause I was attempting to vindicate. If in any instance I have used improper severity, I most heartily retract it.

As my present sentiments are not those in which I was educated, I trust I was enabled, before I embraced them, to *sit down and count the cost*. I knew full well, that "THIS SECT was every where spoken against." Had I only consulted my own ease, or made my calculations merely to secure the friendship of my erring brethren at the expense of truth, I might, indeed, "repent" that I had dared to be "an author."

Although conscious of the rectitude of my motives in writing, and feeling an unshaken confidence in the sentiments which I have endeavoured to advocate, as being according to the mind and will of Christ; yet I am far from being insensible to the opposition combined against me. As a man, it is impossible but that I should feel

the unpleasant shyness and resentment of some, and the oblique cold-hearted friendship of others: yea, even the displeasure of my *friend at Salem*, produces unpleasant and painful sensations. But notwithstanding all these, truth must be vindicated.

I hope, Sir, in the course of this review, to convince you, that it is not the "pressure of your arguments," nor a "candid presentment of facts," which I complained of as *persecution*; but something widely different from them both. I can truly say, I have felt far less from your *arguments* than from your *insinuations*. By the first, you attack my sentiments, and try to prove them erroneous; but by the last, you impeach my motives, and excite a suspicion against my integrity. I hope, nevertheless, to be able to do justice to your arguments, on the examination of which I now enter.

You commence your first Letter, Sir, by noticing a very trifling matter of *etiquette*, in the controversy between your beloved brother at Thornton, and myself. The sentence so exceptionable both to him and you, was the following: 'Your *Friendly Letter* which was published in December, 1791, I could not obtain until several months after, *and have not the pleasure of acknowledging your politeness in sending me a copy*; although from an apology offered by your generous brothers, I am *inclined to hope* it was not a designed omission.' It was thought in this statement, that ample justice was done to your brother; but since neither he nor you are satisfied, it is necessary that the public should know the true state of the case.

You are pleased to say, "The Letter, owing to some casualty or mistake, failed of reaching you directly from him." Do you know, Sir, that he ever sent one? If he did, it is more than I ever heard before. But you add, "Copies of it, however, at his particular instance, were forwarded to you by two of his brothers; with an apology for the failure, and a respectful assurance, that it was not to be imputed to any culpable inattention on his part." All this, Sir, appears very plausible, but it happens not to be exactly correct. The true state of facts according to my best recollection, (and I believe I am

correct) is as follows. Some time previous to the publication of the above Letter, the Rev. Thomas Worcester, of Salisbury, informed me that his brother, at Thornton, had written a Reply to my pamphlet on what is called *Close Communion*: that he was then on his way to Worcester to get it printed.

Some considerable time after, I sent to Worcester in order to procure a copy, and was informed that it was not printed there, but at Concord in N. H. I then sent to Concord to the printer, and was told that it was in the press, and when completed I should be furnished with a copy: but this also failed. During the latter part of the winter and spring, I was frequently questioned, by my friends from different parts of the country, respecting Mr. Worcester's "Friendly Letter." At length a gentleman of your present congregation, while conversing with me, mentioned the subject of the "Friendly Letter," and observed, that he had understood, or thought, I was nearly ready to publish my reply. I informed him I had never yet seen *Mr. Worcester's book*. He appeared to be much surprised, inasmuch as it was a Letter addressed to me, that I should not have been served with a copy; and proposed to procure me one for perusal.

A few weeks after this, (being not far from six months after its publication) I received a copy from Mr. Worcester, of Salisbury, with an apology, expressing his surprise that I had not received one before, being wholly unable to account for the omission. Some time after I received another, and a similar apology from your brother then at Worcester, (these were both referred to in my Reply.) But, Sir, neither of these apologies were pretended to be made, "at the particular instance of your brother" at Thornton; nor have I ever had the least reason to suppose they were made at his request, or even by his knowledge. I supposed he must have known that, by some means, I had failed of seasonably obtaining a copy. One word of apology *from him*, or from any person "at his particular instance," would have completely satisfied me, as unforgiving as you suppose me to be.

I will not conceal, that I felt the omission very sensibly, let it have been from what quarter soever; as I frequently heard the exulting remarks of my Pædobaptist friends, without being able to make any reply,—having never seen the book to which they referred. It was thought at the time, that the above circumstances fully justified the manner in which the omission was noticed. I may, however, have been too severe: if so, I am ready to retract it, and the public will not fail in doing your brother ample justice.

You proceed, next, implicitly to charge me with the want of attention to the rules of politeness, in not sending you a copy of *my* late publication. Had it been a letter addressed to you, I should feel the force of your reproof. But I am willing to acknowledge, that I never understood that common usage obliged me to send a book to every person whose writings I had noticed, or whose name I had happened to mention. If this be really an omission, it is not the only one I am guilty of; nor am I the only person who will come under the reproof. You can best judge, Sir, whether the ancient proverb will apply, "Physician, heal thyself."

You profess to be disappointed in not finding in my Appendix any notice of your brother's "Candid Discussion, &c." in answer to my '*Brief Vindication*.' I do not feel myself accountable for your disappointment; as I cannot easily conceive why you should expect me, at this distance of time, to reply to a work which I had intentionally omitted for more than a dozen years. For reasons which I could assign, I felt willing to rest that controversy with the public, without writing again. If there was any advantage from the *last blow*, he certainly had it; and I was not so much of a child as to contend for it.

I will briefly mention some of the reasons which powerfully concluded against my making a reply. The first was, it appeared to me that he had entirely shifted the ground of dispute, as stated by himself in his "Friendly Letter." In this, he made the following statement: "The question to be disputed is summarily this, whether for a person to be baptized by immersion after believ-

ing, be an essential term of communion at the Lord's table?" (Part III. p. 8.)

To this statement, my arguments throughout my Reply were directed. As there was no dispute between us with respect to the necessity of baptism in some mode as a *visible* qualification for communion at the Lord's table, it reduced the subject to this single question, "What is gospel baptism?" Two things, it was conceived, were necessary to constitute gospel baptism; i. e. that the person to be baptized should be a proper subject; and that the ordinance be administered in a proper manner. That none but believers could be admitted by the gospel rule, and that nothing short of immersion was to be considered as baptism, I furnished the most ample testimony. But to these arguments, which, if I have any discernment, must be allowed to be to the point according to the statement, he was pleased to make the following reply: "But if you should write upon the *proper subjects*, and *appointed mode of baptism*, until you are as *old* as Methuselah, and as *blind* as Bartimeus, it will be of no purpose as to the subject of close communion." (Cand. Discuss. p. 100.)

After comparing the foregoing *statement*, and his *result* upon my remarks, a man must have a greater fondness for controversy than I have, to pursue the subject any further.—These reasons, it is hoped, will be thought sufficient to clear me from the suspicion of deeming your brother's "Candid Discussion" either "unworthy of my notice," or "unanswerable," as you have been pleased to suggest.

No mention of your brother in a controversy with you would have been made by me, had you not introduced the subject; for, however you may be considered as not only united by the ties of nature and friendship, but by a common interest in this subject, I have no more to do with this connexion than though you had never heard of each other.

The remaining part of this Letter being principally taken up in stating the different subjects which were treated of in my book, I shall take no further notice of it than just to say, the rules which you have prescribed

to yourself (p. 7.) in conducting your part of the controversy, I have no particular objections to; but wherein you depart from them, I hope you will not be offended if I correct your deviations.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully yours, &c.

LETTER II.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

HAVING finished your preliminary observations in your preceding Letter,—in this you proceed to open the subject of dispute, by stating one of the propositions which I undertook to prove, viz. 'That Mr. Worcester had totally mistaken the promise in his text; that the Apostle referred to a promise entirely distinct from that from which he has reasoned.' In proof of this point, it was made to appear, that the *promise* in the eighth verse of your context, and that in your text, were the same; and that both referred to a *promise made twenty-four years* before the institution of circumcision, and which was recorded in the xiith chapter of Genesis, and not in the xviith, where the covenant of circumcision is found. To this reasoning you have made the following reply: "*I was aware* that the PROMISE referred to in my text was *supposed* to be the same which was cited in the 8th verse of the context; *I was aware* that this promise was first given to Abraham about twenty-four years before the covenant with him was sealed, with the sign of circumcision; *I was aware*, that by the Antipædobaptists this promise was not allowed to be included in the covenant of which circumcision was the seal."—"Aware" of all this, Sir, one would suppose, at least, that a man of your known prudence and modesty, would have selected a text of a less doubtful nature as the foun-

dation of your theory. But you had an undoubted right to choose your own ground.

In re-examining your Discourses, I perceive not, however, the least intimation given to your hearers, that the promise in your text did not exclusively refer to the covenant of circumcision, and to no other period. Astonishing as it may appear, your reasoning on the subject must have led them to a conclusion directly opposite to that which you now tell us you were *aware* was contended for as the true meaning of the passage.

In the paragraph which concludes the introduction to your Discourses, you make the following remarkable observations :—"Such, my brethren, is the train of reasoning employed by the Apostle in this instructive chapter. It is (you continue) particularly to be remarked, that, with a view to convince the Galatian brethren of their unhappy error, in respect to justification, he ascends to the *memorable period* of the institution of the church in the family of Abraham, takes *the covenant* THEN MADE *with Abraham and his seed*, and traces it down in the transmission of its privileges and blessings to the Gentile churches." How you could make this solemn statement to your hearers, and afterwards publish it, and now republish it to the world, when there does not appear in the whole chapter to be the least reference to *that covenant*, but to a *promise* which you tell us you were *aware* was delivered about twenty-four years before, is to me perfectly unaccountable!

"The Apostle (say you) ascends to that memorable period of the institution of the church in Abraham's family," (referring to the xviith of Genesis.) No, Sir, he passes in silence over that, and ascends to a period still higher; and, as if designing to guard against such a conclusion as you have formed, has marked the promise he referred to with the utmost precision, by stating the time in which it was given, to be 430 years before the giving of the law. This is a fact which I think you will hardly choose to deny, and one which concludes most decidedly against your reasoning. You will not be offended, dear Sir, if I request you, before you publish another edition of your Discourses, to examine this par-

agraph, and a few others of a similar nature, and see whether, in the zeal of the *polemic*, you have not been too inattentive to the accuracy of the *divine*.

In my Strictures, I attempted to show that you had *mistaken* the promise in your text; but you now inform us, it was not a *mistake*; and have chosen to defend what I considered as an error, rather than to retract it. And that we might understand that nothing escaped you when contemplating your subject, you tell us, that you "were *aware*" that the promise insisted on in your Discourses, was first given to Abraham about twenty-four years before the existence of that covenant which was sealed with circumcision!

But what appears still more extraordinary is, you go further, and say, "I was aware of all the arguments which you have advanced in support of their opinion:" (meaning the opinion of the Antipædobaptists.) But how you should be "*aware* of *all my arguments*," months before they were conceived in my mind; yea, before you had thought of printing your Discourses, much less I of writing Strictures upon them, is not the easiest thing in the world to conceive. Should you say, that other writers had advanced the same arguments, I should not think proper to contradict you; but I confess I should be much gratified to know who in particular had ever advanced *all my arguments*. I can only say, I never saw them, nor did I ever contemplate them until after reading your Discourses.

After showing in the most clear and undeniable manner, that the Apostle, throughout the chapter which contained your text, had his eye upon a promise distinct from that from which you had reasoned, I observed, that "your laboured superstructure was left without foundation." To this you reply; "Really, Sir, this is doing the business off hand."——"But"——say you, "my superstructure has stood your blow unshaken, and still rests secure on an immoveable basis." This "immoveable basis" must then be something distinct from the *promise* in your text; for I must still insist, that I have proved even to *demonstration*, that that promise did

not belong to the covenant of circumcision, on which your arguments were predicated.

It seems, Sir, notwithstanding the proof which I exhibited in the above case, you are unable to perceive what the "dilemma" is, in which I considered you to be placed. I really supposed, that most writers would feel themselves in some kind of a *dilemma*, had they brought forward a favourite theory as founded upon a particular passage of scripture, should it be clearly proved that that scripture did not support it. I ever conceived, that when a preacher had selected a text as the foundation of his discourse, and proceeded to infer certain doctrines from it (whatever he might be *aware* of) that he meant his hearers should believe that the text supported the doctrine he inferred. But it seems that nothing of this kind would embarrass your theory in the least.

Your attempt, Sir, to make it appear that the other parts of your text, exclusive of the *promise* mentioned in the close, are quite sufficient to support your theory, only serve to show that you feel the difficulty, although unwilling to own it.

But, Sir, was it not the promise in the last clause of your text, to which your doctrine looked for its main support? Your statement reads thus: "*In God's covenant of* PROMISE *with Abraham, provision was made for the continuance of the church formed by it, and thus for the transmission of the privileges and blessings contained in it, from generation to generation, down to the close of time.*" This, Sir, is the doctrine as stated in your Discourses, and which you propose, as arising from the text placed at the beginning of them.

In this statement you undeniably refer to the time when circumcision was instituted, and to no other; for you expressly mention, "God's *covenant of promise*" by which a church was formed in Abraham's family. Now, Sir, if you were "*aware*," at the time of writing and delivering your Discourses, that the promise in your text was the same with that in the eighth verse of your context; that twenty-four years had elapsed between the time of its being given, and the period referred to in

your doctrine; that it was clearly distinguished by the *terms* in which it was expressed, as well as by the order of time;—I ask, did you not take an unwarrantable liberty with your hearers, to conceal all these circumstances from them? You certainly will not pretend, that they were *aware* of all the things of which you profess to have been. It is not believed that one in a hundred of your hearers had the most distant thought, that the promise in your text did not exclusively refer to the covenant of circumcision. If any of them thought otherwise, they were not indebted to your Discourses for the information.

I perceive, Sir, that you are much disturbed at my saying, that "your laboured superstructure was left without foundation." This conclusion was made upon the supposition, that I had proved you to have mistaken the promise in your text. I am not very tenacious about it: the proof is before the public, and they are at liberty to draw their own conclusions. Nor do I suppose a doctrine is necessarily false, because not supported by the text on which it is founded; but I certainly think it renders it very doubtful.

You proceed to say, "Were your premises to be admitted in their utmost extent, they would only go to evince, that I have transgressed that correct rule of sermonizing which requires the text to be such as fairly to support the doctrine. But, Sir, this is a very different thing from proving, that my doctrine is without foundation." My dear Sir, have you not lost sight of the proposition which I undertook to prove? It was simply this, "that you had mistaken the *promise* in your text; that the Apostle referred to a promise entirely distinct from that from which you had reasoned. This point, I have still the satisfaction to believe, I plainly proved: more I did not propose to do. As far as this proof went, by consequence, to invalidate your doctrine, so far I may be considered as attempting to disprove it.

As an amplification of your argument, that the doctrine may be true, though not supported by the text, you proceed to say, "Had I chosen for my text 1 Chron. i. 1. *Adam, Sheth, Enosh*; and stated as my doctrine from it,

that all mankind are depraved; my doctrine, though not supported by the text, might have been well founded,"—&c.——Sir, had you published such a discourse as this, and I had written *strictures* upon it, professedly to show that you had mistaken the real *design* of your text, I wish to ask, whether you do not think, that you could have said as many handsome things in vindication of such a discourse, as you have of those which have occasioned these remarks?

There is not a doubt in my mind, but you would have made as fair a show of "Scripture argument" in proving the doctrine of *depravity* from the first verse of Chronicles, as in proving the doctrine of Pædobaptism from the 29th verse of the 3d chapter of Galatians. On the whole, I am willing to give you full credit for this ingenious *simile*; for I really think it apposite to the case under consideration.

In order to illustrate the permanent nature of your doctrine, you proceed to show, that the arguments in support of it "are drawn from no less than *five* very copious scriptural topics." Had you brought *five* express texts of scripture, in support of your doctrine, it would have weighed much more with an inquirer after truth, than all your present arguments. As your *topics* are not formed of express passages of scripture, I see no reason for their being dignified with the title of "scriptural." You might have increased them to twice or even thrice their present number, and had them equally scriptural.

That my readers as well as yours may have a full view of the *five pillars*, as you are pleased to call them, on which your doctrine rests, I will now place them before them in one connected view.

1. "By the covenant made with Abraham, he was constituted the father of all them that believe.

2. "God's covenant of promise made with Abraham comprised all the blessings and privileges ever promised to believers, and to the church.

3. "The covenant made with Abraham and his seed is the covenant of which, in the New Testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator, and which is designated as

the covenant to be established with the church in the days of the gospel.

4. "The church, under the gospel, is uniformly in the scriptures represented as being the same church, or a continuation of the same church, which was formed in the family of Abraham.

5. "The covenant made with Abraham, is expressly declared to be an everlasting or perpetual covenant; a covenant to continue to the latest generations."

These, Sir, are the "five very copious *scriptural* topics" from which your arguments are drawn in support of your doctrine. Did you suppose that we ought to admit your doctrine to be true, and to be strictly conformed to the sense of the Apostle in your text, merely because you had chosen to form the five preceding topics to argue from in its defence? If so, you have taken more than reason requires us to grant.

These five topics are mostly, if not all of them, doubtful. They involve the very subject in dispute. Is it not then begging the question to say, that you have drawn your arguments from them in support of your doctrine? If you had, instead of your second "topic," stated the 15th verse of the third chapter of Genesis, and said, "This comprises all the blessings and privileges ever promised to believers and to the church," I conceive it would have been equally true. But in both cases it would be giving certain expressions a very improper latitude.

Your *third* and *fourth* topics, can by no means be admitted as scriptural in their present form: nor can I perceive that you have fairly supported them. If, indeed, we allow you to attach just as much to the covenant of circumcision as you please, taking in what was promised four and twenty years before, and five and twenty years after, you will do something towards supporting them. But, assign to that covenant just what the scriptures have assigned to it, and your propositions will totter, unless succoured from some other quarter.

"Could it be proved, (say you) as I am confident it cannot, that the promise, to which reference is had in the last clause of my text, did not belong to the covenant on

which the church was founded in Abraham's family; it would certainly, however, be allowed, that this important sentiment lies upon the very face of the text, *that all true believers are children of Abraham, and as his children, heirs.*" Upon the foregoing you ask, "But to what are believers, as the children of Abraham, *heirs?* Undoubtedly (you add) to the *righteousness of faith*, of which circumcision was an appointed *seal.*" I have no doubt, Sir, if you will give yourself the trouble, but for a moment, to review this statement, you will, with me, think it a very confused one: for a man cannot be a true believer without the *righteousness of faith*; this is absolutely necessary to constitute his *right of heirship*; then it cannot be *that*, to which he is made an heir by believing. "But to what (you ask) are believers as children of Abraham heirs?" I answer: "If children, then heirs; HEIRS OF GOD, *and joint heirs with Christ.*" *Heirs to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.* (Rom. viii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 4.)

Your remarks on what somebody has said of Mr. P. Edwards, and of the formidable aspect of your arguments, I leave to your own reflections.

I am, dear Sir, very respectfully yours, &c.

LETTER III.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

HAVING in your preceding Letter attempted to show, that were you even to admit my views of the *promise* to be correct, it would not leave your Discourses without foundation; in this, you labour to make it appear, that my views are not correct; "and that the promise, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, was really included in the covenant of the church, of which circumcision was an instituted seal."

"To elude the pressure of our arguments from the Abrahamic covenant," you are pleased to say, "you and your brethren have *assumed* a distinction between the covenant *first proposed* to Abraham at the time of his call, and the covenant twenty-four years afterwards established with him, and sealed with the sign of circumcision." You further add, "This distinction, I consider as a mere *assumption*." It is evident, Sir, you consider it in a wrong point of light. "A mere assumption," is "the *supposition* of any thing without further proof."* Was this the way by which I established the distinction between the promise given to Abraham in the 12th of Genesis, and the covenant of circumcision recorded in the 17th? You certainly must know to the contrary. I did not *assume* the distinction, but I proved it. And by this *proof* you have been compelled to acknowledge, what was kept wholly out of sight in your Discourses; viz. that the "promise in your text was first given to Abraham about twenty-four years before the covenant with him was sealed with circumcision."

Your subsequent remarks on the "*Work of Redemption*," are wholly irrelevant, as, what you attempt to establish by them, forms no part of the question in dispute. I therefore pass over this part of your Letter without any particular remarks.

Your observations on Gen. iii. 14, 15, and what you have quoted from Mr. *Scott*, are generally correct; and agree in substance with what I stated in my Strictures, that the SEED OF THE WOMAN and the SEED OF ABRAHAM in whom the nations were to be blessed, were the same.

On the supposition that these promises were similar in their nature, you proceed to ask; "Is not the work of redemption *one*, though in constant progression?" No doubt of it. "Is not the church of the redeemed, though under different dispensations, throughout all ages, *one*?" The church of the redeemed, including all true believers, and none else, may be considered as *one*, in a certain sense; but this *oneness* does not depend on any visible organization; but on the internal operations of

* Johnson.

the Spirit of God. You further ask, "Was not the church primevally founded on the gracious promise of the Messiah first given in paradise? And did it not continue upon that foundation till the days of Abraham?" The answer to these questions is, that good men, in every age, have made Christ the foundation of their hopes. But what is all this to the point? Who has ever denied these things?

The above questions you thought proper to ask as a preparation for the following one. "And is it, then, to be supposed, that in this advanced state," (that is, the church under the Abrahamic dispensation) "it would be removed from the foundation of a promise, *comprising the Messiah and all the blessings of his kingdom*, and placed upon the foundation of a promise, or promises, of a very different nature, and *comprising only temporal blessings*?" I know of no person that ever supposed such a thing. Nor, Sir, does this form any part of the subject under consideration. The question does not respect what the church of God, or true believers rested their hopes upon from Abraham to Christ; but whether the seed of Abraham, including the great body of the Jewish nation, was the true church of God? This question I hope to answer in the most satisfactory manner in some of my subsequent Letters.

I am, dear Sir,

respectfully yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

IN your fourth Letter, you proceed to take "a connected view," as you call it, "of God's covenant transactions with that distinguished patriarch;" meaning Abraham.

In this "connected view," you have particularly noticed the several gracious appearances God was pleased to

make to Abraham, from the time he was first called to leave his country and kindred, until the offering up of Isaac, comprising a space of about half a century. The various promises made on these several occasions, you consider as parts of the covenant that was sealed with circumcision; whether made before or after the ratification of that covenant.

In this "connected view," I perceive but one thing that particularly concerns our present controversy; and that is, the following. "When the appointed time arrived, for the *formal establishment of the church in Abraham's family*, the divine appearance to him was peculiarly solemn and glorious."

The "*formal establishment of the church in Abraham's family*," is a position which you have *assumed*; and yet you have reasoned from it in this and several other of your Letters, with as much confidence, as though you had furnished the most ample proof of its truth. This is the more remarkable, as you had just charged me with having *assumed* a distinction between God's promise to Abraham of the Messiah, and the promises of the covenant of circumcision. There is this difference, however, what you charge me with *assuming*, I conceive I fully proved. The position you have *assumed*, you do not pretend to prove; for, say you, "It is not necessary in a laboured manner to prove, that by the covenant made with Abraham, a *church was formed in his family*:" but add, "of this fact, as it may appear in the course of our subject, the scriptures afford the most plenary evidence."*

As you did not intend to labour this proof at large, it is natural to suppose you would fix the attention of your readers on some one single text which you judged to be most in point. In order to this, you have made the following statement. "To Abraham and his seed, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, *pertained*, as the Apostle to the Romans assures us, *the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises*. More than what is here expressed, say you, certainly could not be necessary to constitute a church in the strictest sense."

* Diss. p. 9.

Are we to consider the point as now proved? "Really Sir, (to return a compliment of your own) this is doing the business off hand." Or shall we consider this as a specimen of the incorrect manner, in which you apply the scriptures in support of your theory? At any rate, it will serve to show how little evidence will satisfy you on a point which you wish to believe. It is conceived that few besides yourself can see, in this quotation, the smallest degree of proof, that by the covenant of circumcision a church was formed in Abraham's family. The particular privileges here mentioned by the Apostle, as enjoyed by the seed of Abraham, were unknown at the time when you suppose the church to have been constituted.

It may be thought uncertain to what period the Apostle alludes, when he speaks of the *adoption* of the Jewish nation; but it is most probable, that he refers to a period subsequent to their leaving Egypt. This is pretty evident from the other circumstances connected with it, such as the *glory*, and the *giving of the law*, &c. By the *glory* I am inclined to think he meant those symbols of the divine presence, the ark and the mercy-seat;* or those extraordinary appearances in the tabernacle and temple. The *covenants*, he could not refer exclusively to the covenant of circumcision, (if to that at all,) as that was but one. The *giving of the law* was an event which certainly took place several hundred years after the Abrahamic covenant, by which you suppose the church was formed. The *service of God* was also visibly set up among this people at the same time, and never till then. The probability therefore, is, that the Apostle referred to events in the history of that nation, which were unknown until long after the institution of circumcision.

Nor does it appear by all which the Apostle has said in the whole of the foregoing passage, that he had the least reference to their being a "visibly organized church," either at that, or any other time; but only meant to give a brief view of their national privileges.

As you evidently lay very great stress upon this circumstance, it is important that we examine it with critical attention. It seems quite remarkable, that you should

* See 1 Sam. iv. 21.

fix upon a period for the visible establishment of a church in Abraham's family, when not one of the heirs of promise was yet born! Ishmael, the son of the bond woman, was the only son which the patriarch had at the time: and although by divine command he received circumcision, which you are pleased to call the *seal of the righteousness of faith*; yet he was afterwards excluded from the special blessings engaged to Abraham's seed. The church, you now assure us, was brought into "an organized state." But of whom was this church composed? Abraham was the only male living at the time, as far as we know, with whom the covenant was made, and who received the sign of circumcision. Some of his servants might have been pious, they might not: the scripture is silent on this point. It surpasses reasonable credibility, that they should all be truly pious. And as neither Isaac nor Jacob were then in existence, it was impossible that they should constitute a part of the visible church, which you tell us was now organized in the family of Abraham. Although we can see no evidence of the "visible organization of a church," yet we have no difficulty in conceiving, that God should *engage by covenant* to Abraham, that the principal body of believers should for ages remain in his family, and among his descendants. But to conceive that a church was visibly organized, merely because God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and all the males of his house, is to me unaccountable. Was there any thing in the family of Abraham, or among his immediate descendants,—or even for several hundred years after, which gives the least evidence of their being in a regularly organized church state any more than before? Nothing, Sir, that we can perceive, excepting the rite of circumcision; and this was never performed as a church act.

If there ever was a time when that people might with propriety be called a visible church, it was, I conceive, when in the wilderness of Sinai they were brought into an organized state by Moses. This period was evidently alluded to when the prophet Jeremiah was directed to go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I remember the kindness of thy

youth, *the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*" * — "When the Jews left Egypt, (says an ingenious writer,) and began their journey in the desart——it was the time of their youth. And when in Horeb God claimed them as his peculiar people, and they said, All that the Lord commandeth us we will do,—it was the *season of their espousals.*"†

If this were the time of their espousals, it bids fair also to be the time of their *adoption*, as mentioned by the Apostle. This was evidently the time when God's *glory* was displayed in a most conspicuous and striking manner; particularly at the giving of the law at Sinai. It was here too that we first perceive the "*service of God*" visibly set up, and attended among that people as an organized body.

It would seem by your statements, that the church from Adam to Abraham, had been favoured with a dispensation of the covenant of redemption, although not so clear as that which was afterwards given. I suppose you refer to God's gracious declaration respecting the *woman's* SEED; and I entirely agree with you, that "this was the first exhibition, or revelation of the eternal counsel of peace, or covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son." And that this "is the unchangeable foundation and source of all the merciful dispensations to our fallen race." I also believe this to be the *covenant* to which the Apostle referred in your context, (Gal. iii. 17;) and which he tells us *was confirmed before of God in Christ.* I further agree with you, "that this was the foundation on which the church," or, to speak more properly, all true believers, "rested their hopes from Adam to Abraham;" and from him to the coming of Messiah; and on which they *must rest them* to the end of time. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

If you understood me to argue that the church or people of God were, by the covenant of circumcision, removed from this foundation to one of a temporary nature, you have grossly mistaken me. Hence, I consider all

* Jer. ii. 2. † Jay's Sermons.

your arguments to refute this sentiment, as levelled against a mere *man of straw* of your own raising. But, Sir, there is a point, and a very important one too, which is nearly connected with this, on which I conclude there is a real difference of opinion between us. I mean with respect to the *persons* who are supposed to form this church, and to rest upon this foundation.

Of the above description I consider true believers of every age and nation, under every dispensation; and none else. You inform us, "That by the covenant made with Abraham a church was formed in his family." That "to him and his seed, in the line of Isaac and Jacob,------pertained the *adoption*," &c. Will you indulge me, my dear Sir, to state a few queries? for I can proceed no faster than I can see my way clear.

1. I wish to be informed, whether all "the seed of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob;" (for that is your statement,) were by the covenant of circumcision constituted into a regular church?

2. If all the seed of Abraham, as above stated, belonged to the church thus "visibly organized;" will it not follow, that it was the intention of Jehovah, that his *visible church* should be composed in a considerable part, if not principally, of real unbelievers? And,

3. Was this church, comprising all the seed of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, *the very church* which was to be continued, in its then "visibly organized" form, under the gospel dispensation? Or,

4. Is it, after all, your real meaning, that this church, thus constituted, consisted only of the spiritual seed of Abraham? If so, we ask,

5. How circumcision, which was applied indiscriminately to all his male offspring, could possibly bring *this* church into "a more compact state," or in any sense organize it as a distinct visible body?

6. Permit me, Sir, to ask one question more,—Did all who received the *sign of circumcision* belong to this church? If not, in what way were the members distinguished as a visible, organized body?

These questions may appear unpleasant to you; but I hope, Sir, you will patiently consider them, and not treat

them with that *hauteur* and contempt which you have too often manifested in your remarks upon my Strictures. They appear to me to be serious difficulties, which the credit of your plan requires to have fairly removed.

That the true spiritual church of God, (if it be proper to use such an expression,) I mean, however, the great body of true believers, has in every age been the same I have never had it in my heart to deny. But that this body of believers, under any dispensation, was ever brought into a "compact body," into a "regularly organized state," until Christ, under his own personal ministry, set up his gospel church, which he chose out from the world, I find no evidence.

The question, Sir, between us, is not, whether religion is not always the same under every dispensation? nor whether the children of God are not essentially the same in every age? but whether the Jewish nation, comprising all the circumcised "seed of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob," was the same in its "visible organization" as that body of believers, which it was the design of Jesus Christ to unite together in a visible church state under the gospel dispensation? This, Sir, I consider to be a fair statement of the subject in dispute. If I can comprehend your reasoning, it has been your design to establish and vindicate the affirmative of this position; I have, without the least disguise, undertaken to defend the negative. It is the church, in its "visibly organized state," which constitutes our whole dispute on this point.

It is believed that there never was a church, at any period in the family of Abraham, until Jesus appeared in the flesh, which did not constitutionally admit unbelievers as well as believers. But, under the gospel dispensation, it appears to have been the intention of the great Head of the Church, to separate believers from the world; not only from idolatrous heathens, but from their nearest unbelieving connexions according to the flesh. The following words of our Lord are too explicit to be easily mistaken. "And there were great multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, If any man come unto me, and *hate* not his father and mother,

and wife and *children*, and brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." * This passage is explained by Christ's answer to Peter when he said to his Lord, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee, and what shall we have? And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, that---every one that hath *forsaken* houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mothers, or *wife*, or *children*, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."† Does this, Sir, look like that family membership formed by the covenant of circumcision? Or does it appear, with a clearness not to be resisted, that it was the design of the Saviour to separate the precious from the vile, the wheat from the chaff; and to form a church of *lively stones*, to be a *spiritual house*?

Will you contend, Sir, that it was the design of the all-wise God, in forming a church in the family of Abraham, particularly in the "line of Isaac and Jacob," to form a *spiritual church* of real believers only; and at the same time to constitute all the children of these patriarchs and their descendants, together with all the servants born in their houses, and bought with their money, members with them? This, Sir, you will please to remember, is the very tenure of the constituting covenant, as you consider it, recorded in Genesis xvii. 12, 13. I should hardly suppose you would venture to advocate the sentiment, and yet it seems your theory will oblige you to it; or else to deny that it was the design of Jesus Christ, under the gospel dispensation, to set up a spiritual church, composed of such only as, in a judgment of charity, were true believers; such as had been born of water and of the Spirit. One or the other it certainly behoves you to do, or to acknowledge that the gospel church differs materially in its "visible organization," from that which you suppose to have been constituted in the family of Abraham. You will take what ground you please: I mean to maintain my first position, that the gospel church differs so essentially from what is called the Jewish church, that, considered as a "visibly organized body," it cannot be the same. All your laboured

* Luke xiv. 25, 26. † Matt. xix. 27---29.

arguments to prove the contrary, have not afforded the least conviction.

On the whole, Sir, I can find no evidence, that a church was visibly organized in the family of Abraham at the time of the institution of circumcision. It does not appear, that any visible alteration with regard to the public worship of God took place at that time, or immediately after; nor indeed for several hundred years. Nor do the scriptures, that I can recollect, afford evidence that the descendants of Abraham did ever worship God publickly and unitedly, until the time of their peregrination from Egypt to Canaan.

The tabernacle was first erected by Moses in the wilderness; and *then*, and not till *then*, the service of God was set in order. The rite of circumcision does not appear to have ever been publickly attended; indeed from the very nature of the rite, we should not suppose it was ever designed to make a part of public worship. And as no other religious rite was instituted at the time, I am not a little surprised that you should, with such an air of confidence, *assume* the position, that by that covenant a church was visibly organized in the family of Abraham. Perhaps it might appear to you so self-evident, as to require no proof. It is by no means so to me; nor can it be admitted until it be fairly proved.

You will recollect, Sir, that you have admitted that the term *church* is not used in the old testament scriptures; yet you say, other terms of equivalent import are abundantly used."* Why are you not satisfied to use those terms, if you believe them to be equivalent? It would, in my judgment, disencumber the subject of many embarrassments which arise from the unscriptural language in which it is now presented to the mind.

You know, Sir, that εκκλησια, the word used by Stephen, Acts vii. 38, which the translators have rendered *church*, is not of itself sufficiently definite, to determine the moral character of any collection of people to whom it is applied. For in Acts xix. 32 & 41, the same word is rendered *assembly*. And this assembly was

* Diss. p. 10.

composed of an immense crowd of idolatrous pagans, who for hours had been vociferating, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" No one, it is presumed, will suppose that this *assembly*, because it is called an *ecclesia* or church, bore any very striking resemblance to the true church of Jesus Christ. It was indeed an *assembly* or *congregation*, and so is the church of Christ when collected together. But the former was a promiscuous irreligious *assembly*; the latter is a congregation of believers, an assembly of holy men and women.

The ἐκκλησία, or congregation in the wilderness, mentioned by Stephen, does not answer to the character which the New Testament has led us to form of the church of Christ. This assembly is in general represented, as being far from the temper of the gospel. For notwithstanding Moses gave the most clear and incontestable evidence, that he was sent of God to be their leader and deliverer, yet this dying martyr declares, that *they would not obey him, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back into Egypt; saying unto Aaron, make us gods to go before us; for as for this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a* CALF *in those days, and* OFFERED SACRIFICE UNTO THE IDOL, *and rejoiced in the work of their hands.*" I hope, Sir, you will not charge me with "degrading," what you call the "*pre*-Christian church," by giving this extract from the protomartyr. However, I very much doubt whether you would be willing to hold communion with any body of people, though bearing the Christian name, who should be guilty of such open idolatry as is here charged upon that nation generally.

If the word *ecclesia* were always rendered church, it would afford no decisive evidence in favour of your position. It would only show that the same word might be differently applied. No person can be so absurd as to suppose that it is to be understood precisely in the same sense when applied to a Jewish, to an Ephesian, or to a Christian assembly. It will hence follow, that if the *ecclesia* in the wilderness, (Acts vii. 38.) and the *ecclesia* at Ephesus, (Acts xix. 32.) and the gospel *ecclesia*, (Acts

ii. 47.) are all essentially different, then your argument can derive no strength merely from this solitary instance of its application to the Jewish congregation in the wilderness.

Nothing can be plainer from the word of God, than that the congregation, (for so Pool's Continuators render it) which Moses was with in the wilderness, was principally composed of unbelievers and idolaters, who were never suffered to go into the promised land. We read, that there went out of Egypt with Moses about *six hundred thousand on foot* THAT WERE MEN, *besides children, &c.** Of this numerous church or congregation, you will recollect, Sir, that of all the adult males only Caleb and Joshua were permitted to go into the land of promise: all that were above twenty years old when they left Egypt were doomed for their unbelief to fall in the wilderness.† From the manner of St. Paul's noticing the conduct of this people, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, and the divine displeasure manifested against them, we have little reason to conclude, that any considerable number of them were the real children of God. Yet, Sir, this congregation you are pleased to call the *pre*-Christian church. A Christian church containing only 2 believers, to 599,998 unbelievers! It would thin our ranks exceedingly, were we to admit that the *post*-Christian church (as you term it) had but little more than one believer to 300,000 false professors! And yet if the church, in its visible organization, is to continue the same under the gospel, it is difficult to see why it may not be so, unless we suppose the world to have grown much better.

On the whole, as you have not exhibited that plenary evidence from the scriptures, which you tell us they afford in favour of your position, that the gospel church (for such it must be considered, if it be the same which now exists) was "visibly organized in the family of Abraham;" and as we find no such proof in the Bible, we feel justified in doubting the fact.

In conformity to common usage, I have frequently in my late Appendix, when speaking of the Jewish nation,

* Exod. xii. 37. † Numb. xxxii. 10—13.

used the term church. But no one will be so uncandid as to infer from this a concession in favour of your position; because it is fully known, that it was my decided intention to prove, that that body, whether called church or nation, was essentially different from the gospel church.

How you can with any show of justice support your charge against me, of merely assuming a distinction between the promise made to Abraham, in the xiith. of Genesis, and the covenant of circumcision made and ratified twenty-four years after, I am totally at a loss to conceive. That I attempted to prove, that there was a clear distinction you certainly will not deny. And should it be finally concluded that I failed, yet as I endeavoured in a fair and open manner to do it, can I reasonably be charged with "merely assuming" it? But Sir, I mistake exceedingly if I did not succeed in this attempt, and really prove a clear distinction; and one too, made by the Apostle himself. This distinction, Sir, you have not been able to destroy, notwithstanding all your labour to blend the two together.

But, Sir, the point which I have now been contesting, though of vast importance in your scheme, and from which you draw many of your most potent arguments and conclusions, you have indeed *assumed*. No attempt on your part has been made to prove it, notwithstanding the scriptures, as you inform us, "afford the most plenary evidence in support of it." Hence I hope we shall not be thought uncandid, if we set down for nought all the arguments and conclusions in both of your books which depend on this postulatum for their support.

Perhaps you may reply as in another case, "Really, Sir, this is doing the business off hand." We certainly feel willing to dispense with any further consideration of it, until you bring forward your plenary proof of it.

I have already carried this examination to a length that I did not intend when I began; and should you charge me, as in another instance, of having "fought as one who beateth the air," I might hesitate in denying the charge; for I freely confess, that in this instance, I have had little else to oppose.

There are some other things in this letter which will be noticed in my review of the next.

Hoping that what I have offered may have its due weight upon your mind,

I subscribe, respectfully,

Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

BEFORE I enter upon the subject of your VIth Letter, you will permit me to notice a very singular sentiment contained in the close of your IVth.

Having given what you call a connected view of the covenant, and noticed the different places where the Lord appeared to Abraham, you proceed to say, that "the *promises* first made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the law was added at Horeb, were from time to time renewed, until, about twenty-four years after they were first given, they were solemnly ratified and sealed in the form of a covenant; just as *proposals* first made to-day may be renewed at several different times during any given period, and at length may be ratified and sealed in the form of a civil contract."

It is extremely unpleasant, Sir, to feel obliged to dissent from a Christian brother, whose talents and discernment I truly appreciate, so often as I find myself compelled to do in this Reply. Painful as it is, I must proceed.

In order to a clear understanding of your statement just quoted, I need not insult you by asking, whether "a school-boy of ten years old—would not deserve a reprimand," were he to represent "promises" and "proposals" as meaning the same thing.* According to your mode of reasoning, there were no promises at

* Vid. Letter, p. 124.

tually made to Abraham until the sealing of the covenant with circumcision! *Proposals*, you know, Sir, can become obligatory only by being accepted and ratified by the parties. But *promises* are very different things. Were all the divine communications to Abraham, previous to the sealing of the covenant with circumcision, to be considered merely in the light of *proposals?* Was there nothing certain in all that God had promised him until that event rendered it so? Did the faith of that venerable patriarch rest only on *proposals?* Or at most, on conditional promises?—It ought in justice to be acknowledged, that "you have advanced something new" on the subject: for I believe you are the first writer who has dared, for the sake of giving aid to the covenant of circumcision, to lower down those previous solemn promises to mere unratified proposals.

Do, Sir, indulge me to place two or three of these promises before you, and see if you can discern nothing more permanent and decisive than what is contained in mere proposals. "Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.—And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" (Gen. xii. 1—3.) "This promise comprised the Messiah, and all the blessings of his kingdom;" yourself being judge.

About eight years after, as Abram had no heir, he proposed to adopt one born in his house. But, "behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, *So shall thy seed be.* And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (chap. xv. 4—6.) Although I do not suppose that this was the first instance in which the patriarch exercised faith in the divine promise; yet this is often referred to by the inspired writers as a remarkable instance of his

confidence in the truth and veracity of God. (See Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. and James ii. 23.)

To the above gracious promises of an *heir*, and a *numerous posterity*, God was pleased to add, "I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, *to give thee this land to inherit it.*" (Gen. xv. 7.) To this declaration Abram replied, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" In order to give him the fullest confidence in the divine declaration, the Lord condescended to confirm it by the awful solemnities with which covenants at this period were ratified; viz. by the passing of the parties between the parts of slain beasts.* Accordingly, at God's command, Abram took a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, each of them of three years old; together with a *turtle-dove* and a young *pigeon*, and prepared them for sacrifice. The beasts he divided, and laid the parts in order against each other; and then, in all probability, *passed between them* himself. After which, while waiting at the place for some visible token of confirmation on God's part, *a deep sleep fell upon him, and an horror of great darkness.* In this *trance*, the afflicted state of his posterity in Egypt, and their final deliverance, were revealed to him. When lo, to his unspeakable joy, immediately after the going down of the sun, "*Behold a smoking furnace, and a* BURNING LAMP, *passed between*

* The word (saith an elegant writer) translated to *make* a covenant in all the three learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that is, according to the uniform application of it in the Old Testament, and the constant phraseology of the most approved Greek and Roman authors, signifies to *cut*, to separate by cutting asunder, to *strike* down. The word *covenant* in the original Hebrew, according as we derive it from one or two words of similar form or sound, signifies either a *purifier*, that is, a purifying victim; and the phrase to *make* a *covenant* will import, to *kill, strike, cut off* a *purifying victim*; or it may signify a grant of favour, a deed of gift freely bestowed and solemnly ratified by the most high God. Dr. Hunter, *in loc.*

The Hebrew ברית and the Greek διαθηκη, might be properly rendered an *establishment.*†

The covenant with Noah and every living thing, can be considered in no other light than an *established law.* There were no conditions annexed to it. By God's covenant of day and night (Jer. xxxiii. 20.) the *established ordinances* of heaven are undoubtedly to be understood.

† Vid. Brown's Scrip. Dict. on the word covenant.

those pieces! And the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. (Ver. 18, 19.)

Could any doubt respecting the fulfilment of this promise remain on the mind of Abram, after beholding this significant symbol of the divine presence, the *burning lamp*, pass *between the pieces* of the sacrifice? I cannot, I dare not entertain such a dishonourable thought of the "father of the faithful." No: for the Apostle has assured us that "*he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.*"

Are all these promises, Sir, ratified with such vast solemnity, to be considered only as *proposals* made from time to time respecting a covenant to be ratified at some future period? From the sentiments of respectful esteem which I have ever entertained for your piety, learning, and talents, it is, I assure you, my dear Sir, with a mixture of concern and astonishment, that I have traced your attempts to explain away the certainty of these glorious promises made and ratified to Abraham with such unusual solemnity. To reduce them from the high character of *immutable* promises to the mere form of conditional proposals, or parts of an unfinished, unratified covenant! Can it be, that nothing as yet was made certain to Abraham? Interesting proposals are indeed allowed to have been made, "that the Lord would *bless him, and make his name great, and that in him all nations should be blessed.* But how or by what means he had not been informed, nor could he have had any distinct idea."* Although unlimited confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God might justify Abraham in acceding to any proposals he might think proper to submit to him; yet in ordinary cases, a prudent man would certainly not be blamed for hesitating in a matter, of which he "could have no distinct idea."

"Proposals," if I understand the nature of them, are obligatory on the party proposing, only as they are acceded to by the other party. If made for a limited

* Letter, p. 21.

time, they bind the party from whom they proceed, for that time, and no longer, unless accepted and ratified. If made without limitation, they are binding only at the time when offered. If not accepted then, the party proposing is at liberty to continue, to withdraw, or to alter his proposals, at pleasure.

These observations will help us to discern with more clearness the force of your other arguments, drawn from what you call "a connected view of the covenant made with Abraham." This argument, on examination, appears to be much more plausible than solid. It is conceived, that premises which, separately considered, may be allowed to be generally true, by an ingenious management may be so arranged as to give a false conclusion.

That all the promises and communications of every kind which God made to Abraham during the whole course of his life, were parts of one great connected plan, is undoubtedly true; and so were all the promises and other communications made by God from the creation, to the days of Abraham, and from that time to the closing up of the volume of revelation: but it will not necessarily follow, that all these promises were comprised in the covenant of circumcision, any more than that the "provisions" of that covenant were comprised in those which were antecedent or subsequent to it. The fact is, as asserted by the Apostle, that *God at sundry times, and in divers manners spake unto the fathers, by the prophets*, respecting the coming of the Messiah, and the salvation of the elect through him.

The great plan of redemption, conceived in the eternal mind, began to unfold immediately after the fall of man. The promise of a Saviour was at first but dimly seen, as the mere dawning of the day of grace; but as the time for its accomplishment drew near, it shone with greater clearness and glory. The declaration, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, though sufficient to inspire a ray of hope, was nevertheless indefinite and obscure. No section of the globe was designated as the place of his birth, nor any portion of the human family distinguished as the progenitors of the Me-

siah. But when God called Abraham, he was pleased to let him know, that this high honour was conferred on him. *In him the families of the earth were to be blessed.* When this promise was renewed, at the time of the offering up of Isaac, it was confirmed with the solemnity of an oath, and expressed as follows: "*And in thy* SEED *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* As Isaac, (a nearer progenitor) was now born, the Messiah according to the flesh was no longer to be considered as in the loins of Abraham; therefore, it is not said in *thee*, but in thy *seed*, shall all nations be blessed.* But as the seed of the patriarch was to become numerous as the stars of heaven, it was still uncertain what branch of his family Messiah should spring from; hence in due time infinite goodness saw fit to give the promise a still more limited application. Jacob, in his dying benediction, foretold that *the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came.* From the numerous tribe of Judah, at length the royal family of David was selected, and intimations given him by the Spirit of God, that the Messiah should be his *offspring*. That a virgin of his descendants should be honoured to *bring forth the child, whose name was to be called* IMMANUEL! Bethlehem, the city where David dwelt, was also designated as the birth-place of this august personage.

Thus aided by divine revelation, we are enabled to trace, through a succession of ages and generations, with increasing clearness, the progress of this great plan of redeeming love. But why this vast plan should be thought to centre in, or to emanate from the covenant made with Abraham when circumcision was instituted, is not easy to conceive, unless to support some favourite hypothesis. We are willing to give that covenant its full share, and consider it as one of those gracious manifestations God was pleased to make, preparatory to the coming of his Son, and the setting up of his gospel kingdom.

Having premised these things, I proceed to consider more particularly the propriety and strength of your argument, drawn from what you term "a connected view of the covenant." In this "view," you consider the dif-

* Gen. xxii, 18.

ferent promises made to Abraham, during the space of more than twenty years, as "proposals" made and renewed at several different times, and at length "ratified and sealed."*

On your mode of reasoning, I take the liberty to ask a question, and I presume it will be deemed a fair one. The question is, Whether any thing can be considered as binding on parties covenanting, which is not expressed in the particular instrument to which the seal is affixed? I have no doubt, Sir, but in any other case you would agree with me, that nothing could be considered as granted to, or binding on the parties, in consequence of any previous *proposals*, excepting what is expressed in the instrument to which they seal. To admit any other principle in "*civil contracts*," would be deemed highly absurd; and would be attended with the most pernicious consequences. Give up this principle, and a door would be opened for endless evasions and litigations. It could never be known, in case of a difference of opinion, what was covenanted; as proposals made from time to time might differ from each other, as well as from those which might be finally agreed to at the time of ratification.

To apply the foregoing reasoning:—I trust, that in the preceding pages, it has been made sufficiently clear, that the great promise, *In thee, and in thy seed, shall nations be blessed*, was not "specially particularized at the time the covenant was sealed with circumcision," taking your own explanation of each as the rule by which to judge. Should we even allow your mode of reasoning, and admit that that promise was among the previous "proposals," yet as it was not *particularized* in the instrument, at the time the covenant was sealed, it cannot be considered as making a part of it, without destroying all the established rules by which we judge of covenants betwixt man and man. It is conceived, that the covenant of circumcision, which was twenty-four years after this promise, could not give *effect* to it, unless it had been specially recognized in it; nor had it power to render it of *none effect*, any more than the law could, which was four hundred and thirty years after.

* Letter, p. 25.

In your "connected view of this covenant," you have not only made it to embrace all the previous promises made to Abraham, but have given it a still more extraordinary extent, so as to embrace the principal communications which God made to the world through him for nearly half a century! I know not why, upon the same principle, you might not extend this covenant much further backward and forward, as well as to begin and end where you have done; for if this distinct unconditional promise, given to Abraham long before the covenant of circumcision was either made or ratified, is to be considered as a part of it, no fair reason can be assigned, why any other previous promise, relating to the same important subject, especially one which is allowed to be "the same for substance," should not also be included in it.

Should it be asked, wherein the promise under consideration differs from the promises in the covenants of circumcision? I answer, the one in dispute, which was quoted by the Apostle, Gal. iii. 8. referred primarily, if not solely, to the Messiah, who was to spring from Abraham, and in whom alone *all the families of the earth were to be blessed*. But this promise did not contain a grant of the land of Canaan, nor give Abraham a right to circumcise his male offspring: so on the other hand, though the covenant of circumcision contained both of these, it did not contain the other.

But you have anticipated this objection, and hence reply, "But unquestionably, Sir, this great promise belonged to some *covenant* made with Abraham and his seed;" and add, "I ask then, to what covenant did this promise belong?" Possibly this question to you might contain a very serious difficulty; but I must confess I have not discernment enough to see it. Will you permit me, dear Sir, to ask, to what covenant did that promise (as you call it) in Gen. iii. 15. belong? to what covenant do all the gracious promises which God has ever made concerning the kingdom of Christ belong? must they all necessarily belong to the covenant of circumcision? or is a promise of God thought to be less certain, because not reduced to the specific form of a covenant? Surely not. It hath pleased a sovereign God to reveal

his gracious designs of mercy in various ways to guilty men. The truth is equally *sure*, whether communicated in the form of a solemn *declaration*, (Gen. iii. 15.) or in a *prophetic promise*; (Gen. xii. 3.) whether styled a *covenant*, and ratified by the *solemnity* of passing between the parts of slain beasts; (Gen. xv. 17, 18.) or by the *token* of *circumcision* in the flesh; (Gen. xvii. 11.) or if even confirmed by the solemnity of an *oath*, (Gen. xxii. 16.) it must, after all, rest upon the veracity of God: he could swear by none greater than himself. Equal credit is to be attached to all that he hath said. Or must we conclude, that our faith will unavoidably waver, unless supported by some visible covenant *token* continually before our eyes? No, surely: for we remember who hath said, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

In all the covenants recorded in the scriptures, as subsisting between God and man, there is nothing, that I recollect, that bears the least analogy to your description of the one made with Abraham. In no one instance where God has condescended to covenant with man, have previous "proposals" been made for his consideration.

In the commencement of your Discourses, you have given, to be sure, a very ample account of a covenant made with Adam, and of the *conditions* of it; the correctness of which, I shall not stop here to examine: but will only say, you appear to possess a knowledge of that important transaction, which Moses never had, or at least which he never communicated to the world. The account given by the sacred historian reveals the *will* of God to man; not as "proposals" for a covenant, but in the authoritative form of *law*. *And the Lord God* COMMANDED *the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* THOU SHALL NOT EAT OF IT: *for in the day thou eatest thereof thou* SHALT SURELY DIE.

When God made a covenant with Noah, and with every living creature, we hear nothing of previous proposals: for it was no sooner proposed than made. *And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed*

after you; and with every living creature that is with you, &c.* As this covenant was not only made with Noah, who was *found righteous*, but with all the human race without limitation; God was pleased to *set his* BOW *in the cloud, as a token of this covenant*, and to render it equally visible to all mankind.

The blessings promised to Abraham, at the time he was called to leave his kindred and country, are by your statement all made conditional, although, as stated by Moses, they have not the least appearance of it. There is not a single IF, which is the sign of a condition, in the whole account. Every sentence reveals the *will* and *purpose* of God, and stands impressed with regal authority. *Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house*, was the divine mandate. And *by faith Abraham obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went.*

The covenant recorded in the xvth chapter of Genesis, is in the same form; emanating entirely from the good will of God. No previous proposals were submitted, nor any doubtful conditions annexed. The promise of an heir from his own body, and of a numerous posterity which should spring from his loins, together with a grant of the land of Canaan, were all unconditionally secured to the patriarch by a solemn covenant.

After the ratification of this covenant, we have no account of any divine appearance, or special communication made to Abraham, for the space of about sixteen years. Is it possible, Sir, that during this period, all the solemn engagements which God had made to this eminent saint, were considered by him as unfinished transactions? as only mere "proposals," to be adjusted and ratified another day? Or, is it possible to conceive, that any one of these promises should have failed, had it not pleased the Almighty to have given some further confirmation, and to have ratified them in some different form? Surely I should suppose not.

From a careful examination of these interesting transactions, as recorded in the Bible, it is difficult to conceive, how the idea should have ever entered your mind, that "the promises first made to Abraham,——and from

* Gen. ix. 8—10.

time to time renewed," are to be considered "just as proposals first made to-day, and which may be renewed at several different times, during any given period, and at length may be ratified."

But if the promise in dispute did not belong to this covenant thus ratified and sealed, you ask, "To what covenant did it belong?" Although an implicit answer has been given to this question, I am not unwilling to answer it more explicitly. Should I say it belonged to a covenant that was four hundred and thirty years before the law; you will probably ask again, "What covenant was that? in what was it different from the covenant afterward ratified and sealed with the sign of circumcision? and for what purpose was it instituted?" The difference between this and the covenant of circumcision, I trust has been made sufficiently clear, in the preceding pages. I am not obliged to show for what particular purpose it was instituted. All that I am concerned to do at present, is, only to show that it is called *a covenant* in distinction from that recorded in the xviith chapter of Genesis. It is thus distinguished by the Apostle in your context, Gal. iii. 17, in the words following; *And this I say, that the* COVENANT *that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the* PROMISE *of none effect.* Now, Sir, you will please to recollect, that the covenant recorded in the xviith of Genesis, according to your own argument, was not ratified and *confirmed* until it was "sealed with the sign of circumcision." But, it is plain that circumcision was unknown to any creature living at the time; and for years after the Apostle assures us that *this covenant was* CONFIRMED OF GOD IN CHRIST. Had the Apostle admitted your connected view, (as you are pleased to call it,) why should he place this covenant which was "confirmed of God in Christ," at a period which cannot possibly agree with the time when *that* covenant was confirmed with the sign of circumcision? Why should he so particularly specify the time when this covenant was *confirmed*, if he considered all the promises made to Abraham for the space of fifty years as parts of *one covenant?* Would it not have been sufficient, to

have referred to this covenant generally, as you have done in your Discourses. You have constantly argued from *this promise*, in support of your doctrine of the *perpetuity of that covenant* of which circumcision was the ratifying *token*. And all this too, without giving the least intimation, that "this great gospel promise," was not "particularly specified at the time, that that was sealed with the sign of circumcision." Perhaps you thought it unimportant. But the question forces itself upon us,—why should the Apostle deem it so important as to distinguish it with such accuracy? I conceive there can be no fair answer, but only, because in his view it was distinct.

I have one proof more to offer in favour of my position, and that shall be drawn from the testimony of another Apostle. I am sensible the passage I am about to quote has been pressed into your service, but I think improperly.* I refer to the exhortation of Peter to the Jews, when assembled at the gate of the temple. "*Ye are*," said he, "*the children of the prophets, and of the* COVENANT *which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham,* AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE KINDREDS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED." I presume, Sir, you will not deny, that the Apostle here referred to that "great gospel promise" of the Saviour, first made to Abraham at the time of his *call*, and renewed at the time of his offering up his son about fifty years after. Had he referred to the intervening covenant of circumcision, no doubt but he would have quoted some promise contained in that covenant. If, instead of the present, he had said, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE THEE;" in this case it would have been in point. It is hence evident, that the Apostle did not refer to a *promise* which respected Abraham as the "constituted patriarch of the church," but to one which respected Christ as the *appointed Saviour* of lost sinners. As the matter now stands, I shall rest entirely satisfied, that the distinction which I before made between the two promises is

* See Letter VI. p. 33.

perfectly just, and that what you are pleased to call a mere "*assumed distinction*," is fairly supported by the testimony of two Apostles.

Although in my Strictures I have sometimes used the word *covenant*, yet generally I have made use of the simple term *promise*, as more frequently used in the New Testament. I have also now given you my reasons for calling this promise a covenant. Should you again ask, What covenant it was? I shall think it a sufficient answer to say, That it was *that covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law was given at Sinai*. This could not be the covenant of circumcision, unless *confirmed* twenty-four years before its "*ratification!*"

I was, Sir, upon the point of dismissing this article, but recollecting a question that you have brought up in another Letter relative to the same argument, I have thought proper to answer it here. Speaking of the above promise, you ask, "Was the promise, then, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, merely personal, or was it of a public nature? Did it belong to Abraham only as a favoured individual, or did it belong to him in his public capacity, as the patriarch and representative of the church?" I answer, To neither, strictly speaking. It could not belong exclusively to him as an individual, because it was not a promise that he alone should be blessed: But that *the nations should be blessed in him*; that is, as after explained, in his *seed*, which meant Christ. Nor could it belong to him as the "patriarch of the church," because, by your own concession, he was not thus constituted until more than twenty years after the promise was made. The plain solution then of your question, is this: The promise was a *prophetic* one; containing a prediction of the Messiah, and of the blessings of his kingdom. And we are taught by an inspired Apostle, that *no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*.

From the view which we have now taken of the subject, I ask, Sir, if it does not appear, with a clearness not to be resisted, that you did actually mistake the promise in your text, and that by all your laboured argument you have not been able to extricate yourself, from the

charge which I supported against you in my Strictures. Your assertion with respect to the "*renewal* of the covenant with Isaac and Jacob," proves nothing more than the renewal of the *prophetic* promise under consideration to these patriarchs; but furnishes no proof that it belonged to the covenant of circumcision.* Indeed, Sir, I should suppose that a moment's reflection on the first text which you have quoted, must convince you that it proves exactly the opposite for which you brought it. Suffer me, Sir, to place it again before you: "The Lord appeared unto Isaac,——and said, Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee and bless thee; for unto thee and unto thy seed will I give these countries, *and will perform the* OATH *which I sware unto Abraham thy father.*"

To what period does this refer? when was it that the Lord sware unto Abraham? You know, Sir, it was not the time when the covenant of circumcision was ratified, but at the time when Isaac was presented as a victim upon the altar at Moriah, more than twenty years after the ratification of that covenant. At this time too, the "great gospel promise" was repeated to Isaac, which had been confirmed to Abraham by an oath.—*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* This passage, to me, carries on its face a complete refutation of your novel sentiment, that this promise was made to Abraham *as the patriarch of the church:* unless Isaac and Jacob were in the same sense "constituted patriarchs of the church." Considered in any other light than a *prophetic* promise, there would be just as much propriety in saying, that in Isaac, or in Jacob, *all the families of the earth should be blessed*, as in Abraham; for the same things are said of their *seed*, as of his. But beyond all controversy, in every instance where these expressions are used, not the *natural* or even the *spiritual seed* of these patriarchs, but Christ, emphatically called THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, is meant.

I fully agree with you, Sir, that "it is a very great infelicity when a sentiment or scheme, supported by bold assertion, goes directly in the face of both the Old Testament and New." The public will apply this remark as they think proper.

* See Letter VI. p. 31.

Unwilling to lose sight of your argument till I had considered it in all its possible bearings, I have already drawn this Letter to an improper length, and shall therefore omit any remarks on your fifth Letter until my next.

I remain, dear Sir, respectfully yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

WHAT you are pleased to call "a *connected view* of God's covenant transactions with Abraham," has been pretty fully considered in my last, and shown to be utterly inadmissible. I trust it has also been made fully to appear, that though the different communications, which God was pleased to make to Abraham, from time to time, in the space of fifty years, were parts of one great plan, as were undoubtedly all the other communications he ever made to any of the human race; yet it by no means follows, that they were all parts of the covenant of circumcision.

The impropriety of supposing, that by the transaction recorded in the xviith chapter of Genesis "a church was visibly organized in the family of Abraham," has also been sufficiently exposed: for these reasons I pass unnoticed, what you have advanced in your Vth Letter, which is now under consideration, on the same points.

I have also duly noticed your question, respecting the "removal of the church from the glorious foundation on which, for two thousand years before, it had securely rested," and of placing it on "entirely different and merely temporal ground." I hope, Sir, it has been satisfactorily shown, that no such sentiment has ever been advanced or advocated by me. Although I have constantly maintained, that the Jewish nation, taken collectively, could not be considered as the gospel church, or as "resting on this glorious foundation;" yet I have never disputed, but that every *believing individual* of that nation

as well as all other believers, at all times, did rest upon that foundation, and upon no other. You must certainly know, Sir, that this is not the question in dispute. It is not whether *believers*, either Jews or Gentiles, do not make a part of the church universal, (as it is called,) and of course rest upon this foundation; but whether this can with propriety be said of the Jewish church, which, by its visible organization, comprised the whole nation? While I freely concede to the former, I am constrained to deny the latter.

I now proceed to the consideration of some things in your Vth Letter; particularly, to inquire whether "the promise, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*," was "comprised in the comprehensive promises expressly mentioned" in the covenant of circumcision? Upon this you remark, "You yourself, indeed, seem to be apprehensive, that it might be comprised in the comprehensive promise, *A father of many nations have I made thee.*" And add, "but this promise you attempt to explain away by connecting it with other promises." Sir, did I "connect" it with any thing but what it stands connected with in the covenant of circumcision? I presume you will not pretend it. Is it not then a very extraordinary conclusion, that I explained away its force, merely by showing its connexion with the other promises given at the same time? But in what manner is it supposed that I explained it away? Probably you meant the following sentence,—'For notwithstanding it is said, *A father of many nations have I made thee*; and although this might, *in a metaphorical sense*, allude to his being the father of believers of all nations; yet it must be observed, that it stands immediately connected with the following words; *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and will* MAKE NATIONS OF THEE, *and kings shall come out of thee.* These expressions,' I added, 'taken together, do not amount to a promise, that the nations which should spring from Abraham's loins, or any others, (that is, any other nations) should be blessed in him.' After giving a mangled and imperfect view of this statement, you reply, "Had not your manner, Sir, been so positive, I might possibly have used the freedom, under authority of the

Apostle, directly to contradict your assertion." I a glad, on the whole, you did not; for I think you wou have found it extremely difficult to have engaged th Apostle in support of your assertion.

Besides, the measure you have taken, it must be allow ed, is much more respectful. "But as the case now i (say you,) I take leave to ask, if, by the promise, *A fathe of many nations I have made or constituted thee*, Abraha was *made*, or constituted, *the father of believers* of all na tions, there were not believers of all nations by the sam divine promise constituted *his children and heirs?*" Shoul we consent here to admit your premises, we should sti feel safe in denying your conclusion, which is as follows "And if by this promise, *believers* of all nations are con stituted the children of Abraham, and heirs of his bless ings, then does it not clearly amount to a promise, tha *in him all nations should be blessed?* Is it not by becomin his children and heirs that any are blessed in him?"

Few of your arguments, Sir, have appeared more as tonishing than this. Yet, from the complacency wit which you seem to regard it, I have no doubt but yo considered it absolutely unanswerable. But, Sir, by you permission, I will proceed to examine it.—Is it true, i your opinion, that the sum of the *first* GREAT GOSPEL PROMISE made to Abraham, *In thee*, or *in thy* SEED *shal all nations be blessed*, means no more than that Abraham should be "constituted" the father of believers in a spir itual sense, and that in the same sense they should be considered as his children?—If this be not your opinion, then your argument must be viewed as wholly irrelevant. If you assert this as your opinion, will it not contradict what you have said in other parts of your book? And will it not involve difficulties and absurdities which you will be unwilling to meet? But as this subject has been treated at great length in my last, I shall here mention only one serious difficulty, which appears to me to be sufficient to refute the sentiment. In order for any to be Abraham's children, in the above sense, they must *previously* be Christ's. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise:* viz. that *in him*, that is, *in his seed*, WHICH IS CHRIST, *all nations should be*

blessed. This blessedness consists essentially in being chosen, called, pardoned, justified, sanctified, and adopted into the family of Christ. And as every believer is possessed of the same faith by which Abraham was justified, they are consequently considered as his children, and heirs according to the promise.*

In order to illustrate this sentiment, let it be observed, that believers, as the *heirs of salvation*, are under the guardianship of angels; but the guardianship of angels never made them believers, but is only to be considered as a consequential privilege of their being believers. So, in the case before us, our being Abraham's spiritual seed is not the *ground* or *cause* of our believing, but our believing is the very ground of our being considered the children of Abraham.

In order to render the subject still plainer, if possible, I add, once more, The *blessing of Abraham*, or *to be blessed in him*, was not a blessing to be derived from Abraham, as something deposited in his hands, and which he, as the father of the faithful, could bequeath or bestow, at pleasure; but to be blessed with the same blessing that Abraham himself was. Hence, I conceive, it does not appear, that the Apostle considered the promise, *A father of many nations have I made thee*, "as clearly amounting to a promise, *That in him all nations should be blessed.*"

That these two promises have some relation to each other, will not be denied: so has every *effect* some relation to its *cause*; but notwithstanding this relation, it will forever remain distinct. To use an expression of yours, "I was aware," Sir, that the Apostle had quoted in a *parenthensis* the passage under consideration from the covenant of circumcision, and applied it as an illustration of his subject. It must be apparent, however, from the manner in which he has quoted and applied it, that he laid no very great stress upon it. Nor do I perceive that he "held an opinion opposite" to mine; for I considered that 'this might, in a *metaphorical sense*, allude to Abraham's being the father of believers in all nations:' and this is precisely the sense in which it still appears to me that the Apostle used it. But this is far from admitting, that

* Gen. xii. 3. Gal. iii. 29.

he understood it as of the same import of that "great promise which included the Messiah, and all the blessings of his kingdom."

If what has already been stated, is kept in mind, it will, it is conceived, utterly destroy your conclusion, that "the promises, *A father of many nations have I made thee*, —and, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*, are clearly correllative promises; and, as such, the one essentially implies the other." We trust it has been satisfactorily proved that these do not imply each other, but are entirely distinct. That the first of these promises included the Messiah and all the blessings of redemption in him; while, on account of the pre-eminent faith which Abraham had previous to his circumcision, the last conferred on him the honour of being considered as the father of believers of all nations. This important distinction I beg leave to recommend to your most serious and prayerful attention.

As I have already anticipated the principal things contained in your 6th Letter, I will here just subjoin two or three additional remarks, and then relieve your patience.

Your design in this Letter is evidently the same as in the former, viz. to prove that "*the ancient gospel* PROMISE, *In thee, and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed*, was included in the covenant established with Abraham and his seed, and sealed with the sign of circumcision."*

Your first argument is founded on Rom. iv. 11, upon which I shall here make only one remark. Taking it for granted that the Apostle considered, that by the covenant of circumcision, Abraham was "constituted the father of believers of all nations," you ask, "Does he not say, or clearly teach, that all this was done, that unto believers of all nations, as the patriarch's constituted *seed*, *righteousness*, even the *righteousness of faith*, *might be imputed?*" It appears to me, Sir, that you place the Apostle in a very awkward situation; for you make him argue that men may be believers without having the righteousness of faith: for have you not elsewhere said, that none but true believers are the children of Abraham? And

* See Letter VI. p. 29.

are they true believers without having the *righteousness of faith?* Are such to be considered merely as candidates, or as persons duly qualified *for* the righteousness of faith? Alas, what inconsistencies are you driven into, in order to defend your theory? Permit me, Sir, to ask, once more, if all believers, from the first moment of their believing, are not possessed of the *righteousness of faith?* Does not the Apostle declare, that *by him*, that is, Christ, *all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses?* And are believers justified without the imputation of righteousness? Abraham's *faith* is spoken of as the particular act in which righteousness was imputed to him.—And the Apostle is particularly careful to state, that he had this *faith* when *in uncircumcision*, seemingly with a design to exclude that transaction from any share in it. But you make the ground on which righteousness is imputed to us to depend on our being *Abraham's seed*, and not on our believing. If these are not your views, I confess I have not been able to comprehend your reasoning; and yet if they are, I must say they appear both unscriptural and absurd. Your remarks on the "renewal of the covenant with Isaac," I have considered in another place. My answer to them will equally apply to what you have said concerning Jacob.

It only remains to notice your observations on the rapturous declaration of Zacharias at the time of the circumcision of his son, who, he was assured, was sent to prepare the way for the Saviour. After quoting the words recorded in Luke i. 68—73, (excepting the 71st verse) you proceed to the following conclusion: "In this passage again we have clear and decisive proof, that all the mercy to be performed by the coming of the Messiah had been *promised to the fathers*, had been *spoken of* to the church by *the holy prophets* from the *beginning of the world*, and was comprised in *the holy covenant* sealed to Abraham and his seed by the sign of circumcision, and *confirmed by an oath*." What is all this to the point in question? No one disputes but Christ came according to the *promises made to the fathers*, and agreeably to the testimony of *all the prophets*. Nor do we dispute

that God in sending his Son *remembered his holy covenant with Abraham*, i. e. that, *In him, all families of the earth should be blessed*, and which covenant or promise he afterwards confirmed by *an oath*. But we can perceive no kind of proof, that because the Apostle mentions the *holy covenant with Abraham*, he must necessarily mean the covenant of circumcision; especially considering, that the subject he was now treating of was not "specially particularized" in that covenant at the time of its being sealed with the sign of circumcision: But as we have abundantly shown, both the *covenant* and *oath* were distinct from it. In examining your arguments, Sir, they appear to the mind much like the hills on a turnpike, to the eye of the traveller. At a distance they have a formidable aspect, but as he approaches them, they appear to lessen, till, at length, he finds himself completely over them without experiencing the smallest inconvenience.

If these observations should have no other effect, I hope they will lead you again to examine with candour the Apostle's argument in the ivth chapter of Romans. Should you do this, I have no doubt you will perceive that the Apostle did not predicate the "imputation of righteousness" to Gentile believers on their being Abraham's seed, but to them as believers, though not circumcised, and in the same sense as it was imputed to Abraham while in that state. Your argument in its present form cannot be admitted, unless it be first admitted, that men may be *Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*, without being *believers*, or that they may be *believers* without possessing *the righteousness of faith!*

I was about, Sir, to close this, and enter upon an examination of your VIIth Letter; but, in looking over what I have written, I find a few things omitted in some of your preceding Letters which I purposed to have noticed. Your goodness will indulge me, though a little out of course, to notice them here.*

* In the close of your Vth Letter you take notice of the change of the patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham; but your argument will apply with equal force to Sarah, whose name was also changed from Sarai to Sarah; and for which the same reason was assigned. It was said to Abraham, "A father of many nations have I made thee; and I will

I wish to observe a few things on the reasons which you have assigned for Abraham's being so long kept in a state of probation before he was constituted patriarch of the church.* You seem to suppose that about twenty years delay was necessary, "that opportunity might be given for the trial, and exemplary manifestation of Abraham's faith, as he was to be constituted the patriarch of the church." There seems a peculiar infelicity attending this conjecture: For the only instance wherein Abraham's faith was specially and peculiarly tried, as recurred to by the inspired writers, did not happen until more than five and twenty years after the period which you have assigned for his probation! It is said by the Apostle, *By faith Abraham, when he was* TRIED, *offered up Isaac.* This was an illustrious instance of the patriarch's faith, and stands recorded to his everlasting honour. But in some other instances, where we should not suppose his faith put to a very severe test, he did not give the most "exemplary manifestation" of it to the world. But lest you should charge me with a design to lessen the reputation of this venerable man, I will present the instance of *trial* to which I refer, in the language of one whom you cannot suspect. "On his entrance into Egypt (saith the excellent Dr. Hunter) Abram is seized with an unaccountable fit of distrust, altogether unbecoming his character, and equally injurious to God, to Sarai, and to the King of Egypt. He is afraid of trusting the honour of his wife, during a temporary residence in a strange country, to that God, at whose command he had given up his native country and his all. He injures the friend and companion of his youth, in supposing her capable of being allured, by the splendour and flattery of Egypt, to forget her duty to her husband. He affronts a prince whom he knew not, by suspecting him of a criminal design against the peace and honour of a stranger driven

will make thee exceeding fruitful, and will make nations of thee; and kings shall come of thee:" And of Sarah it was also said, "Yea, I will bless her and she shall be a MOTHER *of nations; and kings of people shall be of her.*"† And are we, Sir, to consider Sarah, because her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah, as the *patriarchess* of the church, and *the mother* of believers of all nations?

* Letter IV. p. 24. † Gen. xvii. 5, 16.

into his dominions for relief from famine. He has r-course to the crooked path of cunning and falsehood, wh-n the direct road of fairness would have served his tu-n much better."——"The very means which Abram h-s devised for preserving Sarai's chastity, exposed her t- danger. As his sister, she might be lawfully address-d by any one; as his wife, she was considered as sacred t- himself."——"What must have been his feelings wh-n the imposture was detected? How keen his remorse, t- see Pharaoh, and his innocent household, plagued for h-s fault? The conscious shame of having acted wrong, an- of thereby having brought mischief upon another, is, pe-haps, the severest punishment an ingenuous mind c-n suffer."*

I make but one remark upon this quotation, and th-t is, if Dr. Hunter's observations are just, they tend gre-ly to weaken, if not wholly to destroy, your fanciful co-jecture on this part of the history of the patriarch. O- the whole, your direct "scripture-proof" unfortunate-y proves nothing to the point.

I solicit your attention for a moment to another poin-. I refer to your remarks on Abraham's call to leave h-s kindred and country. Have you not, dear Sir, in orde- to strengthen your argument, taken the liberty to chang-e a sentence, (though dictated by the Spirit of God) fro- the *imperative* into the *subjunctive* mood? And ha- you not, in this way, rendered an *absolute* promise ma-e to Abraham *conditional?* "At the time of his call," sa- you, "the Lord promised Abraham, that *if* he wou- depart from his country and connexions unto a lan- which should be shown him, he would make of him a great nation,"† &c. This, Sir, differs materially from th-e account given by Moses. "If," the sign of a conditio-, is not to be found in the whole passage, as related by hi-.

Your attempt to include, in the Abrahamic covenan-, promises which were made long before, and long afte-, but not specified at the time of the ratification of th-t covenant by the sign of circumcision, is a latitude n-t known in any other covenant transaction. The same a-

* Sac. Biog. † Lett. p. 20.

gument that would prove that the previous promises made to Abraham were included in this covenant, would prove that *this*, and the subsequent promises made to him, were comprised in the Sinai covenant. Indeed the scriptures afford much more evidence for the latter than for the former. It is abundantly evident that most, if not all, the provisions of the covenant of circumcision, together with its *initiating seal*, were incorporated with the Sinai covenant, as appears by the testimony of Christ and one of his Apostles.* I could but observe, Sir, in noticing the instances in which God appeared to Abraham, when you come to the time in which the covenant of circumcision was ratified, you appear to be much interested in your subject. You represent the divine appearance as "*transcendently majestic and glorious.*" But, Sir, notwithstanding the impressive light in which this solemn transaction is represented by the help of your descriptive pen, when compared with the account given by Moses, of the divine appearance on *Mount Sinai*, its splendour disappears like the feeble light of a taper before the mighty orb of day. And still our thoughts are pleasingly carried forward from the dazzling glory of that dispensation, to the milder, yet superiour glory of the present, which far excelleth all that has been before.†

I am, dear Sir, respectfully,
Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOU commence your VIIth Letter in a manner characteristic of the candour with which you have too generally treated my writings. "If you have offered any thing," say you, "entitled to be *called argument*, by which to shew, that the ancient *gospel promise* was not

* Vid. John vii. 22. Gal. v 3.
† See Exod. xix. 17—19. 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

included in the covenant of the ancient church, it what you have said with reference to the 16th verse o my context."—It is, to be sure, Sir, not a little puzzlin to conjecture, what you have been so warmly combatin through more than thirty crowded octavo pages, if thi be indeed the first instance in which you have met wit "any thing entitled to be called argument." But m present concern is, to see how you dispose of this.

Without noticing a number of questions, I propos immediately to state what you consider as the real differ ence between us on the following passage: *He saith not And to seeds, as of many; but as of* ONE, *And to thy* SEED *which is* CHRIST. "You and your brethren," say you "if I rightly understand you, construe the ONE in thi passage as meaning *one individual*, or exclusively Chris in person." And add, "This, Sir, I believe to be incor rect; a flagrant violation of the grammatical construc tion of the text, and directly repugnant as well to the tenor of the Apostle's argument as to his express decla ration." After several remarks, of a similar nature, you proceed to say, "By your construction of this text, you not only make the Apostle reason absurdly, but you make him say what is untrue: Nay, you make him con tradict directly his own declarations. For in this very chapter, instead of saying, That Christ in person, exclu sively, is the *one seed*; he says expressly, *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's* SEED, *and* HEIRS *according to the* PROMISE." In the next page you go on to say, "If you still insist upon your construction, it will be incumbent on you clearly to point out the scriptural distinction be tween the *one Seed* to which the promises were made, and the *seed who are heirs according to the promise, and who are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

I hope, Sir, you will allow me to have now given a fair statement of your views of this text. You will not expect me to give at length all that you have thought proper to say in vindication of your plan, as my object is not to reprint your book; but to refute your argu ments. And as I believe them to be erroneous, I hope through divine assistance to do this effectually.

In order to bring our different views of this subject to a fair test, I shall take for granted what I presume you will not deny, viz. That the promise first made to Abraham, *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*, was renewed at the time of the offering up of Isaac, in the words following, *In thy Seed shall all nations be blessed.* We are here not to consider two distinct promises, but the same differently expressed. The latter is evidently exegetical of the former. This brings the matter to this single point, that *In the seed of Abraham all nations were to be blessed.* The dispute then between us on this point will be entirely determined by a scriptural explanation of the meaning of the word *seed* as used in this promise, and as illustrated by the Apostle in the passage under consideration.

Believing I was supported by the unequivocal authority of an Apostle, I have, indeed, considered this promise as centering in, and limited to, Christ, personally. And after listening with profound attention to your reasoning, I am still obliged to believe that he alone was the *Seed* to whom the promise referred. The ground you have taken in opposition to this construction, is, that Christ and his church, or the spiritual seed of Abraham, are intended by the *Seed;* and that they are *one* in the sense of this passage. But, Sir, I hope to convince you that your statement is both unscriptural and absurd. Permit me to ask, Who are to be blessed in the *promised Seed?* The answer must be, "believers of all nations." But are not these, according to your argument, a real part of the *seed* in which they are to be blessed? They evidently are. Then the purport of the passage must be, that believers of all nations, shall be blessed in believers of all nations! According to this, the seed blessing, and the seed blessed are the same! If Christ and believers are the *one seed*, as you contend, I ask again, In whom are we to be blessed?—Should you say in Abraham, another difficulty at once arises; Was Christ blessed in Abraham? No, Sir, directly the reverse. Abraham was blessed in Christ. "If you still insist upon your own construction," that *Christ and believers* are jointly the seed of Abraham to whom the

promises were made, "it will be incumbent on you clearly to point out," how they are blessed *in the seed* of Abraham.

In admitting your construction, Sir, difficulties meet us in every direction, and the more critically we examine your theory, the more inconsistent and unscriptural it appears. Your argument from Christ's being *one body with his church*, is totally irrelevant. None will dispute but that Christ and his church are, in a certain sense, one. But does it hence follow that they are so in every sense? Were they one in making atonement? Did not the prophet, personating Christ, say, *I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me?* Are Christ and his people one in blessing penitent sinners with pardon and forgiveness? *The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins:* But has his Church the same power? None pretend to it but the pope and his adherents. And are not these the very blessings with which the nations were to be blessed in Abraham's seed?" But (say you) *He saith not, And to seeds, as of many*, that is many *seeds*, but of *one*, that is of one *seed*, And to thy *Seed*, which is *Christ*: not the Saviour exclusively in person; but the *Saviour* and his *church as one*." Permit me, Sir, to ask, By what authority do you add to the words of the Apostle? According to this, Christ is as much *blessed* in Abraham's seed as his church. Or, if you render it actively, then it will follow, that the *church* confers its *blessings* on the guilty nations equally with Christ. Both of which, I conceive, to be totally inadmissible.

In applying the passage exclusively to Christ, you also charge me with "a flagrant violation of the grammatical construction of the text." But how have you supported this charge? Why, by showing that the word "seed" is the same in the promise which respected Christ, in whom the nations were to be blessed, and in the covenant of circumcision, which respected the posterity of Abraham. And is it not the same too, Sir, when applied to the word of God?* or even to a grain of mustard? But what does all this prove? Not that I have violated the

* Matt. xiii. 19—21 & 31.

grammatical construction of the word, but that the same word is used in different senses. Is this "entitled, Sir, to be called argument?"

The conclusion which you draw from the explanation given by me is as follows: "According to your construction of the text, his (the Apostle's) argument would stand thus: The promises were made to *Christ*, as the *one seed*, to the exclusion of all others, both believers and unbelievers; therefore, according to the promises, those only who believe can be justified!"—You then ask, "Does the Apostle, Sir, reason at this rate?" No, Sir; nor does any body else but yourself.

It is not possible that you could have so far mistaken me as to suppose, that I meant that the promises were exclusively made to Christ, so that he, and he alone, should be blessed in Abraham's Seed, and consequently be the only heir according to the promise. This could never be inferred from my construction of the text; for that stands in direct opposition to such a sentiment. You, I think, must have observed, in the page preceding the one from which you have made your quotation,* that the contrary is so plain that *a wayfaring man need not err* with regard to my meaning. My observations there were stated as follows: 1. 'The Apostle is particularly careful to distinguish this promise respecting the SEED in whom the Gentile nations should be blessed, from that made in the covenant of circumcision respecting the posterity of Abraham. The *woman's* SEED, who was to *bruise the serpent's head*, was also the SEED promised to Abraham, in *whom* the believing Gentiles should be blessed. But primarily his natural seed, or at most his *spiritual seed*, and not Christ, were intended by the *seed* in the covenant of circumcision. The nations have never been blessed in any other of Abraham's seed but Christ.'† This, Sir, I still consider as scripturally correct, and perfectly analogous with the Apostle's reasoning on the subject. To the above I added, 2. 'The Apostle further distinguishes the promise under consideration, in the 16th verse (meaning of your context.) *Now, saith he, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.* He speaks

* Appendix, p. 260. † Appendix, p. 260.

of *promises*, in the plural: In Gen. xii. 3, it is said, 'IN THEE *shall all families of the earth be blessed.*' If I may use a mode of speech adopted by the Apostle, with respect to the tribe of Levi,* the Messiah according to the flesh was now *in the loins of Abraham.* But, Sir, when this promise was renewed at the offering up of Isaac, this was no longer the case; nor was it then said *in* THEE; but *in thy* SEED *shall all nations be blessed.* Isaac now stood as the more immediate progenitor of the Messiah. The same is observable when this promise was renewed to Isaac and Jacob afterwards.

That your construction of the text, Sir, is unscriptural will still more fully appear in what I have yet to offer. We have already seen, that the first great gospel promise respecting the *Seed* in whom the nations were to be blessed could not relate to Christ and his church in the same sense. It must be evident that one was to bless, and the other to be blessed. We will now see if my construction of the text is liable to the same difficulties and objections. 1. I contend that the word *seed*, when used in this promise to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, referred to Christ. This conclusion, I should suppose, from the very nature of things, would force itself upon us, without recurring to the passage under consideration. But here, Sir, it appears to me, the Apostle has fully decided the point. *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of* ONE, *and to thy Seed, which is Christ.* That we might clearly know in whom we are blessed, *He saith not, And to seeds, as of many*, namely, many individuals; *but as of one*, namely, CHRIST, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, and in whom alone we are blessed; and who will, both in time and eternity, have all the glory of blessing his redeemed people. All who are thus blessed, are Christ's, and consequently accounted as Abraham's *spiritual seed*, and heirs according to this promise: but never, Sir, I believe, as *the seed*, or any part of the seed, in whom the nations are to be blessed.

That this statement is correct will be further apparent from what the Apostle has said in the 19th verse of

* Heb. vii. 9, 10.

your context. *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions*, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME, TO WHOM THE PROMISE WAS MADE. "Till the *Seed* should come:" Do, my dear Sir, pause here a moment, and reflect on the meaning of this passage.

Has not the Apostle, by this single stroke, ruined forever your favourite argument? To demonstrate this, will you permit me, Sir, "in my own manner," to ask, Were there no *believers*, no *church*, no *spiritual seed* born to Abraham, until after the adding of the law? I think you will not hazard the assertion. According to your construction of the text, the *seed*, at least one part of it, had been in the world long before the law was *added*; yea, as early as God had a church in the world. By the same construction, a part of it can never be said to have *come* until the whole church of God shall be completed! But, Sir, if we allow the Apostle to mean as he said, that the promises, as above stated, referred exclusively to ONE, i. e. to Christ, then his meaning is intelligible, that *the law was added till the Seed* (meaning Christ) *should come, to whom the promise was made.* In this view of the subject, all is plain and harmonious: but according to your confused hypothesis, the seed blessed, and the seed in whom they are blessed, are all the same. Really, Sir, if you have exhibited one scriptural idea in your construction of the text, I have only to regret, that I have not discernment enough to see it.

I am totally at a loss, Sir, to account for your passing in silence over the last mentioned text, unless you perceived in it an insuperable objection to your theory. And, even in this case, you "must have presumed very far upon my credulity," if you supposed that a text, so directly in point, would escape the notice of your opponent; especially one so capable of defending what you consider as "a very principal Antipædobaptist fortress," yea, as their very "citadel."

But you ask, "Are you, Sir, prepared to abide the consequences of your construction?" I can only say, I verily believe it to be the truth; and I hope I shall never be afraid to abide by the truth. The consequences which are thought so disastrous to my construction, I

might have remained ignorant of, but for your care in placing them before me. "By holding the construction, that by the *one Seed* we are to understand Christ, exclusively, in person, you are led (say you) to make the assertion, that 'the promises in the covenant of circumcision were not to *seed*, as of one, but to *many*, to Abraham's seed generally;' which (you add) is directly contrary to fact." What is there in the above "assertion" contrary to fact? Nothing, I conceive, if the words are allowed a liberal and candid construction. By 'Abraham's seed generally,' no candid mind would suppose, I meant every individual that could possibly come under that denomination. My meaning, as expressed in the page preceding the quotation, forbids such a conclusion. No more was intended by the expression, than if it had been said, 'the seed of Jacob generally.' I would further observe, that the word *seed*, in the covenant of circumcision, though singular, is used as a *noun of multitude*, that is, comprehending *many*. This, Sir, you will not deny; for his seed was to be as the stars of heaven. And even if you limit the promise to the spiritual seed of Abraham, yet still it was to *many*.

This is precisely the sense in which I used it in contrast with the *one seed*, which the Apostle has declared to be Christ. Abraham's seed, whether natural or spiritual, certainly are many; but Christ is ONE: the only begotten of the Father.

Feeling fully satisfied, that the construction I have given of the text in dispute, is clearly supported by the word of God, I shall not be greatly moved by your severe charges against me. I have endeavoured to examine your arguments with candour, but they have produced no conviction on my mind, that I have treated the Apostle in an unfriendly manner; notwithstanding you accuse me of having made him "reason absurdly," and "say that which is untrue:" nay, more; that I "make him contradict directly his own declarations." These charges you have repeated with much assurance, but I conceive totally failed in proving any one of them.

I should imagine that you lay very great stress upon your explanation of the *one seed*, if I may judge by the

zeal which you have manifested, in trying to give it a bearing favourable to your theory; hence I conclude, I shall be excused in making a few remarks more before I dismiss the subject.

You very justly conclude, that according to my hypothesis, there are at least three distinct seeds, to whom promises were made." And is this, Sir, (admitting it to be true,) a new and alarming sentiment? This statement is not in my language, nor does it exactly meet my views: but I hardly think you can get along yourself, without admitting that the scriptures support the sentiment. The Apostle tells us, that *they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. I know*, said Christ, *that ye are the seed of Abraham.** These, Sir, were undoubtedly the *natural seed* of Abraham.† *If ye be* CHRIST'S, saith the Apostle, *then are ye Abraham's* SEED, *and heirs according to the promise.* These, I presume, whether Jews or Gentiles, you will allow to be Abraham's *spiritual seed.* Now, Sir, did Christ, as the *seed* in whom the nations were to be blessed, strictly belong to either of these classes? You have, indeed, connected him with the latter; but will you say, that Christ was *one* of Abraham's spiritual seed? If he be distinguished from this seed, as he most certainly is, then my "hypothesis" must be scriptural and just: if so, the candid will judge, whether it can be hostile to the Apostle's reasoning, or not. In fine, Sir, the whole of your reasoning on this subject, has served principally to show, how much plausibility an ingenious mind can give to error; and how nearly it may seem to approximate to truth, and still be distinct from it. An observation of an old English *divine*, seems applicable. "It is a wonder to see, (said Dean *Bridges*) how the greatest, learned, and best of all, when they have once deeply conceived an opinion, will *draw things to their own construction.*"

If the construction you have given of the *one seed*, has been proved to be erroneous, then all your conclusions

* Rom. ix. 6, 7. John viii. 37.

† There were certainly promises closely connected, if not included, in the covenant of circumcision respecting Ishmael and his posterity. Gen. xvii. 20.

which were deduced from it, must fall of course; unless, like your Discourses, they have something else to rest upon, when the foundation on which they are built is removed. Your exulting, severe remarks in your last paragraph, are left undisturbed to your own reflections.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER VIII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

IN looking over your VIIIth Letter, I find little which has not been noticed already, as it is chiefly a recapitulation of your former arguments. There are a few things, however, which require to be examined.

After stating what you "have endeavoured to *evince*," you add, "Had it been my object merely to defend my "Two Discourses" against your "Strictures," it might have been sufficient for my purpose barely to have *asserted* or *assumed*, that there were not two distinct covenants, as you have been pleased to *assert* or *assume* that there were." Permit me, Sir, to ask, Did you think this was doing me justice? Was this acting the part of a fair and generous opponent? You here represent me as having "*barely asserted* or *assumed*" the distinction between the two covenants. It is evident you meant, that the words "*assert*" and "*assume*," should be understood in their most popular acceptation, by your qualifying them with the word "barely." It is hence probable, that many of your readers have concluded, that I neither offered a single argument, nor produced a scrap of proof in support of the position, but "*barely* asserted or assumed" it. Yet, Sir, you were so feelingly alive to your own reputation as a public disputant, that before you had reached the bottom of your page, you enter a complaint against me for not having particularly noticed

your "arguments," as stated in your Discourses, which you tell us "were drawn from no less than *five* distinct scriptural topics."

You, however, Sir, acknowledge that I stated your first proposition, and do not complain that I did not do it fairly; but say, "you prudently avoided taking any notice of the arguments by which I endeavoured to support it." And would you think of blaming a man merely for being prudent? But, Sir, you have been so happy in constructing this sentence, that while you appear to blame my conduct, you pay a very handsome compliment to yourself. But if, instead of "prudently avoiding your arguments," I had said, you had "BARELY *asserted* or *assumed*" your proposition; then the public might, indeed, have doubted whether you had distinctly offered a single argument of any kind.—Having said thus much, I cheerfully agree with you, to leave to yourself and a candid public to decide, "whether in a public disputant such a procedure be fair and honourable."

A few sentences which follow the above, are so remarkable, that I am persuaded you would forgive me if you knew that I even smiled while reading them: for who could help smiling to hear you describe the formidable aspect of your arguments? "But careful as you have been," say you, "to avoid a direct *encounter* with my arguments; yet some things of a nature hostile to them are *adventurously* scattered in different parts of your book." These you propose to notice in some of your subsequent Letters. "But at this stage," you observe, "it may be proper to pause, for the purpose of noting more particularly an important point. Let it be here, then, *specially noted*, that if all the precious promises made to Abraham were included in the comprehensive covenant by which the church was formed in his family; if in particular the great gospel promise, *In thee and in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, was included in that covenant, then of necessary consequence your Antipædobaptist theory must eventually fall."—What is the point here so *important to be noted?* Why if all the promises ever made to Abraham were included in the covenant of circumcision, then the Anti-

pædobaptists are wrong to suppose they were not
True, Sir, but this you know is the very point in dis-
pute. Supposing I should wish to have it specially noted
that if all these promises were *not* included in that cove-
nant, "then of necessary consequence your Pædobapti
theory must eventually fall;" would you consider thi
as a conclusive mode of arguing? I should imagine no
And yet you have gone on to draw your conclusion
with as much confidence as if the point were undeniabl
proved.

You greatly mistake, if you suppose that our "Ant
pædobaptist theory," as you call it, depends solely o
this point. Should this be given up, I do not perceiv
that our theory would be in danger. This we hav
never considered as the main pillar, but a mere incidenta
circumstance. If your Discourses may be true, thoug
not supported by the text on which they are founded,
is more than probable we should think our theory saf
should this argument be wrested from us. I will no
trouble you with any further remarks at present, bu
hope soon to proceed to review your next.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER IX.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

HAVING in your preceding Letters finished you
defence of your Two Discourses against my *Stricture*
you proceed in your IXth "to a consideration of thos
things in different parts of my book which more directl
militate" with your arguments.

In order to this, you have quoted a paragraph fro
your Discourses which received my animadversions; pa
ticularly the manner in which you cited the Apostle
words in Rom. iv. 11. which was as follows: "*He r*

ceived the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED, though they be not his natural posterity, THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE IMPUTED TO THEM ALSO."

You proceed to say, "With reference to this passage, you very *complacently* "charge" me, 1. "with misquoting the Apostle's words;" 2. "with misapplying them;" and 3. "with making him give a very important conclusion without any premises." You then add, "To these charges, Sir, I am prepared to reply." Your reply, shall receive all due consideration presently. But pray, Sir, what is there in my animadversions on this paragraph so *uncomplacent* as to excite your resentment? Can it be thought *uncomplacent* to suspect your infallibility in explaining a passage of scripture? I should certainly hope not. Or, was there any thing rude or uncivil in the *manner* in which I treated the subject? If so, let it be pointed out. But as though I were not sufficiently severe, you have taken the liberty to make a small alteration in the outset. You say I "charge" you, 1. "with misquoting the Apostle," &c. My statement reads thus: 'In this, if we mistake not, he has misquoted,' &c.—In taking up the above particulars, I have used the word 'complain;' you use the word "charge."

With reference to the first article of which I 'complained,' of your having "misquoted the Apostle's words;" as you now "readily acknowledge" the omission, and have inserted the text entire in the second edition of your Discourses; I should feel perfectly satisfied, were it not for a drawback which you have made upon the last, by disclosing the motive which induced you to make the correction. After stating, at some length, your apology for the omission complained of, you proceed to say; "However, as upon further consideration, it appears to me, that the last idea," (meaning what was omitted) "will give additional strength to my argument, in my second edition I have given the text entire." According to this, we must suppose the text would have still remained in its mutilated state, had you not fortunately discovered that your argument would derive "ad-

ditional strength" from giving it entire. Whether meant or not, it is evident that *this point* has been so "touched as to be felt." However, you may rest assured, Sir, I never felt a vindictive disposition on account of the omission; and nothing is necessary to atone me, but a fair statement of the text, let it help who it may.

2. "You 'charge' me," say you, "with misapplying the Apostle's words, by saying, 'Circumcision was a seal to Abraham of *his faith*, but it is not said to be such to his posterity, or to any other person on earth.' (True!) 'Mr. Worcester has made it a seal of the righteousness of faith generally.' This," you add, "is my misapplication." Yes, Sir, this is it. But as though you "seriously" assented to the first part of the above statement, you have fixed in a very conspicuous station the word ("True!") If it be indeed *true*, that circumcision was a seal to Abraham of his faith, and to none else, to what purpose are all your interrogatories that follow?

It is of no consequence to the argument whether it were a *seal* to Abraham of *his faith*, or of the *righteousness* of *his faith*. The Apostle has not said, that it was a seal of either, to any other person. This is the ground, Sir, which I have taken; nor do I perceive, from your arguments, any great embarrassment in the way of supporting it. It will be equally to my purpose to admit your distinction between Abraham's *faith*, and the *righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised*. I have no other objection to it, only it does not appear to be warranted by the account given in the Scriptures. Here we read, *And he believed in the* LORD; *and he counted it to him for righteousness.** The Apostle in your context has cited the passage thus: *Even as Abraham* BELIEVED *God, and* IT *was accounted to him for righteousness.*† In the connexion with the passage now under consideration, the Apostle has quoted the words in the same form.‡ In both places, speaking of his *believing*, he says, *it* was counted unto him for righteousness. I would only ask, Whether the word *it*, without "a

* Gen. xv. 6. † Gal. iii. 6. ‡ Rom. iv. 3.

flagrant violation of the grammatical construction of the passage," can be applied to any thing but Abraham's faith?

After having established, as you suppose, your distinction between *faith*, and the *righteousness* of faith, you ask, "But if the RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith* be the same to all true believers; then was not the *seal*, which Abraham received, *a seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith* generally?" By no means, Sir! It was to Abraham *a seal of the righteousness of* THE FAITH *which he had, yet being uncircumcised:* but to all others it was not a seal of either faith, or the righteousness of faith; but a *token* of the covenant between God and Abraham.* Further the Scripture saith not.

Do you seriously believe, that either *righteousness* or *faith* were sealed to infants of eight days old, or to any other unbelievers? I can hardly suppose you do. How then can you argue that it was a seal of the righteousness of faith to any but Abraham? I am at a loss, Sir, to conjecture what meaning you affix to the word *seal.* That the word *seal* is used in different senses in the Scriptures must be acknowledged; but, in this place, it appears to me, that the Apostle uses it as synonymous with *confirmation,*† q. d. *He received the sign of circumcision a* CONFIRMATION *of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.* If you can give a more rational and scriptural explanation of the word, as used in this place, you will no doubt oblige the public. This seems, however, to correspond with what the Apostle said to the Ephesians: *In whom also,* AFTER THAT YE BELIEVED, *ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,* (Eph. i. 13.)

We may as well conceive of a person's being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise before they believe, as to suppose that they are sealed with the righteousness of faith before they believe. The supposition in both cases is absurd. I believe you will find it difficult to make it appear, that the righteousness of faith was by circumcision sealed to those generally who were the subjects of that rite, or even to any one besides Abraham. But you

* Gen. xvii. 11. † Brown's Dict.

ask, "Was not Abraham's faith essentially the same with the faith of every true believer?" Supposing it was, what is this to the point? Was the *seal*, as you call it, applied to none but believers? Was the faith of Abraham's male offspring of eight days old "*essentially the same*" with his? No, Sir, you will not pretend it.

But you ask again, "If circumcision were only a seal to Abraham of his faith, why was it applied to Isaac and Jacob, and to the Israelites generally?" If you cast your eye back upon the original institution, the "*All-sufficient* GOD" himself has fully answered your question: *It shall be a* TOKEN (said he) *of the covenant betwixt me and you*. This, I should suppose, would be a satisfactory answer. That you were embarrassed with my question respecting the 'faith of an infant,' and of 'a servant bought with money,' is easy to be perceived. And as you could not tell how that the righteousness of faith could be sealed to such as had no faith, you try to evade the point by suggesting that the difficulty is between "me and the great Author both of faith itself, and of the righteousness of faith." It is not, Sir, you may be assured, with the divine institutions, or the Author of them, that I contend, but with your explanation of them. Is it not possible, Sir, that you may be wrong?

The third thing which I objected to in your remarks on this passage, was, that you 'made the Apostle *conclude without premises*.' To make this appear, I gave the words as you had quoted them, in the following manner: "*He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised.*" Upon this I observed, 'The Apostle is here made to say, that Abraham was *circumcised*, so that he might be the father of believers that were *uncircumcised*!' To which I added, 'We ask, in the name of common sense, why it was necessary for Abraham to be *circumcised* in order to constitute him the father of believers that are *uncircumcised*?' So far as your remarks upon this last observation proceed from godly jealousy, I must approve of the motive; but I think your fears are groundless. I cannot perceive why it should be thought "adventuring on deistical

ground," to appeal to *common sense*, unless it is supposed, that infidels are the only class of men who, in reasoning, make use of it. Nothing could be farther from my heart than to speak irreverently of any thing which God has appointed. If any thing in the above can be fairly construed to have such a meaning, I most heartily retract it.

But I proceed. "The point here in dispute," say you, "is precisely this; Whether it were Abraham's *faith*, which constituted him the father of them that believe; or whether he were thus constituted, by the *special ordination of God* when he received the sacred sign of circumcision. You hold the former position, I hold the latter." This, Sir, I cannot admit to be a fair statement. In my view, it entirely shifts the ground of the dispute. It is not, Whether it was Abraham's faith, or "God's special ordination," that constituted him the father of believers; but, Whether it were his *faith*, or his *circumcision*. I certainly understood you before, to say that it was circumcision which constituted him the father of them that believe. I was particularly led to this conclusion, from the following passage in your Discourses: "*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised;* FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE, *that he might be the father of all them that believe*," &c.* This passage, with the explanatory clause in capitals as above, led me to understand you, that it was Abraham's circumcision, and not his faith, that constituted him the father of believers. I believe, Sir, I have no where denied, or assented to the proposition, as now stated by you; nor do I recollect to have met with it before. It must be plain, to any one who reads my remarks, that I was not contending, Whether God's *special ordination*; but, Whether it were *faith*, or *circumcision*, which formed the grand prerequisite of Abraham's being considered the father of the faithful.

I have no doubt, Sir, but you attach much more importance to Abraham's being considered as the father of believers, than what I do. It was evidently an high honour put upon him, and probably one part of the fulfil-

* Disc. p. 11.

ment of that promise, that *his name should be made great.** "But," say you, "it was not on account of the pre-eminence of his faith, simply, that he obtained the title of the father of the faithful."† What was it then? Was it on the account of his submitting to circumcision? This was but a mere effect of his faith. I am constrained still to think, that the Scriptures predicate this distinguishing title upon his faith, rather than any thing else. Permit me, Sir, to introduce a remark from an old English divine, made nearly two centuries ago.——"*He beleeved* or *had faith*. This is the first place where *faith*, or *beleefe*, is expressly spoken of in Scripture, and is found in Abram, *called the father of all beleevers*, Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16; and hath *imputation of justice* added to it; because, under this promise, Abram saw and beleeved in Christ; and it was before either the law was given, or circumcision ordeyned. Gal. iii. 16, 17. Rom. iv. 10."‡ This being the first instance which the Scriptures record of believing, the probability runs high, that on this account, specially, Abraham was honoured with the title of *the father of believers*. This, in distinction from circumcision, is the ground on which I placed the argument in my Strictures; and here I propose still to leave it, and wait the decision of a candid public.

In both of your books, in remarking upon this passage, you exhibit an idea which I deem important to notice, though it is not very intimately connected with the argument. It is this;—That righteousness is imputed to believers on account of their being the children of Abraham. On the supposition that the gospel church is distinct from the Jewish——you ask, "How is it that we are blessed with him? that we are heirs according to the promise made to him? and that on *his account as our father*, righteousness is imputed unto us?"‖ This, Sir, it must be allowed, is rendering his constitution as the father of believers, "of very high import" indeed! According to this, it would seem, that all believers were

* Gen. xii. 2.
† Disc. p. 11.
‡ Ainsworth's Annot. Imprinted in the yeare 1621.
‖ Disc. p. 12.

chosen in Abraham; and, on this account, righteousness is imputed to them! Is it possible that you can suppose that righteousness is imputed to believers on Abraham's account! Is not such a sentiment highly derogatory to the honour of the glorious Redeemer? I should certainly have supposed, that the sentence had inadvertently escaped your notice, were it not that the general tenor of your reasoning on the text has the same aspect.

Perhaps, Sir, you will charge me again, with setting aside the authority of the Apostle. I think I do not; but most heartily revere it. But I can never bring myself to believe, that when it is said, "*That he received the sign, &c. that he might be the father of all them that believe;——that righteousness might be imputed to them also;*" that he meant to be understood, that righteousness was imputed on the account of Abraham's faith, or of his being constituted the father of believers; but on account of their believing in the Saviour with the same faith which he had, while uncircumcised. Your sentiment to me, not only appears to be incorrect, but to contain a very pernicious error. It supposes, that we must be Abraham's children before we are believers: for we know that righteousness is imputed to every believer, and as soon as he is a believer; *(for all that believe are justified.)*

In every light in which we can view your statement, we meet with difficulties which are inexplicable. For if it be true, that "on his account as our father, righteousness is imputed to us," then we must be his children antecedently to this act of imputation: but we cannot be his children without being believers; and the very instant we become believers, righteousness is imputed to us. These discordant sentiments, I believe it will be acknowledged, are fair deductions from your statement; they will therefore be submitted to you, to reconcile them at your leisure.

In connexion with this idea of our relation to Abraham, you are led to say, that "as the father of the church, and *the heir of the world*, the WHOLE INHERITANCE was conveyed to him for himself and his seed." On reading this, the mind naturally inquires, To whom did he leave it in trust for the church? and how does this agree with

the Apostle's account in the xith of Hebrews, who, after enumerating a number of illustrious characters, among whom Abraham is particularly noticed, remarks, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* How does it agree with the general idea given of Christ, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.* I know not what precise meaning you affix to the "whole inheritance" of the church: if I have not mistaken you, the above difficulties, with many more of a similar nature, offer themselves for solution on the admission of the sentiment.

I would gladly relieve your patience, Sir, but there is one point more which must be noticed, before I close this Letter. I refer to what I have said with respect to a part of the 11th verse of the ivth of Romans, being considered as a *parenthesis.* Upon this you observe, "I confess it would have been some satisfaction to have been informed, by what authority you dispense with *periods*, and insert *parentheses*, at your pleasure, in the sacred text." It might be deemed sufficient to say, that I do it by the same authority by which you leave out or suppress a parenthesis, when it suits your convenience, as I shall presently shew.

Will you be so good, Sir, as to inform me, whether the Scriptures were originally divided into chapters and verses, and by the inspired writers pointed as they now are? If we may credit *Lewis** and others on the subject, we must conclude they were not. That these divisions are arbitrarily, and, in some instances, injudiciously made, has been acknowledged by most theological writers. But to come direct to the point; I conclude, Sir, you will allow, that it is the construction of a sentence, and not the inclosing it between two circular strokes or brackets, that makes it a parenthesis. I understand a parenthesis to mean "certain intercalary words inserted in a discourse, which interrupt the sense, or thread; but seem necessary for the

* Author of the Hist. of Translation.

better understanding of the subject. The proper characteristic of a parenthesis is, that it may be either taken in or left out, the sense and the grammar remaining entire."* This, Sir, is precisely the light in which I considered the sentence now under consideration. I knew it was not inclosed in a *bracket* or *crotchet*, but it appeared to me, that the Apostle's argument required it to be thus understood. The same is undoubtedly true, of Gal. iii. 13. notwithstanding you have pronounced it "totally irrelevant." I believe that no one who has any philological knowledge will deny, but that the last sentence in the 13th verse, viz. *for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree* is a parenthesis, whether it be to the point in the present argument or not. If it be not, I ask "by what authority" you left it out, when citing this passage in your Discourses? (page 20.) I must suppose you considered this sentence to be introduced merely as an illustration, but not as forming a constituent part of the argument, and therefore thought yourself at liberty to omit it.

But, Sir, we will proceed to a point which is clear and indisputable. The passage in Rom. iv. 17. on which your principal dependence has been placed, in supporting your theory against my Strictures, is decidedly a *parenthesis*, marked in due form. The Apostle's argument would not be injured by omitting the passage entirely. It appears that the first clause of the 17th verse, which is quoted from Gen. xvii. 5. as follows: *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations;)* was referred to merely as an illustration of the last sentence in the 16th verse. It stands thus: *To the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all;* (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) *before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.* The above is almost, if not the only instance, I believe, expressly quoted from the covenant of circumcision, in the New Testament. We do not blame you for making the most which you fairly can of it. But, Sir, to use your own

* Dict. Arts and Sciences.

language, "you must have been strangely forgetful, or else must have presumed very far upon the credulity of your readers, when, in your haste" to reprehend me for altering scripture points, you did not recollect, that in quoting *the very passage* in dispute, you have suppressed the marks of a parenthesis, and pointed it as though it formed a constituent part of the Apostle's argument.*

Thus, Sir, I have proved, that in quoting Gal. iii. 13, you have omitted the very sentence which I considered as a parenthesis, although you have implicitly denied it to be such; and in Rom. iv. 17. that you have incorporated a parenthesis into the body of the Apostle's argument, by suppressing the usual characters which distinguish such a sentence. If it be indeed "a liberty, of at least a very questionable nature," to suppose, that from the construction of a sentence, it ought to be differently pointed; what shall we think of the liberty you have taken, for the above alterations, of which you gave no notice, nor assigned any reasons whatever. I have only to add, I should suppose, that a man who lived in a house of glass, would be cautious of breaking his neighbour's windows.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER X.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

IN my preceding Letters I have endeavoured candidly to examine the principal arguments which you have offered in vindication of your Two Discourses. Your remarks upon my Strictures have also been considered; and the whole will shortly be before the public whose decision I hope will be according to truth.

Notwithstanding I have laboured some points to a considerable length, I am far from thinking that the subject is exhausted. Yet, if what I have written produces no conviction upon your mind, I have little reason to con-

* Disc. p. 11.

clude that any thing which I could offer would have that effect. It would swell my pamphlet to a huge volume, were I to take up, in detail, every thing which I consider to be amiss in your book. Whatever is material to the argument, or to a fair vindication of our sentiments as Baptists, will not be intentionally omitted.

I proceed now, Sir, to an examination of your Xth Letter. In this you exhibit what you call a "counterpart" to my explanation of the covenant of circumcision. I will here present a brief sketch of both, and add a few remarks as I pass along.

The promissory parts of the covenant, I stated as follows: 'Art. 1. *I will multiply thee exceedingly.*' This I considered as referring to Abraham's natural posterity. To which you reply, "The spiritual as well as the natural seed of Abraham will ultimately be as the stars of heaven for multitude." I allowed, although you have not noticed it, that the former might be typical of the latter. But the question is, Whether this be the proper and fair import of the above mentioned promise. Does it agree with the following remark,—*Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the* NUMBER *of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a* REMNANT *shall be saved?*

'Art. 2. And thou shalt be a father of many nations.' This I considered as referring primarily to the descendants of Abraham, which were divided into several different nations; but admitted, that it might be considered as having a 'typical reference' to the church of God. My entire statement stood thus; 'There is nothing in this *article* which points us *directly* to the church of Christ: the utmost that can fairly be made out, will be only a *typical reference.*' Without taking any notice of this last idea, you proceed to charge me with "disregarding the authority of the Apostle." But when the manner in which the Apostle has quoted the passage, by merely alluding to it in a parenthesis is considered, I have no doubt I shall be exonerated from the charge. If by the laws of philological criticism, a *parenthesis* may be left out altogether, I look with confidence to be acquitted by a judicious public.

'Article 3. *And kings shall* COME OUT OF THE' I understood, and explained this, as having a literal respect to the 'natural offspring of the patriarch.' "It had also," you add, "a typical respect to *his spiritual seed.*" I will not at present dispute the point, as it is of no consequence to the argument; but will only observe, that I should hardly suppose, that Abraham's *spiritual seed*, though called *kings and priests*, (in a certain sense) could be said to *come out of him.*

With respect to the 4th Article, I am satisfied to refer it, as explained in my Strictures, and in your Letter, with only adding the passage which you affixed as the motto to your Discourses, with the addition of two lines to complete the sense. "O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen ones---Be ye mindful always of his covenant, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; even the *covenant* which he made with Abraham, and of his *oath* unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a *law*, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant, *saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.*"* By omitting the last paragraph, it will be seen that you totally changed the sense of the inspired writer. To render the passage subservient to your views, you undoubtedly found it necessary to suppress the entire sense of the sacred writer, and to give us only his preliminary remarks, without inserting the subject to which they related.

You are pleased in the next place, to charge me with connecting "the capital promise" as you call it, in this 4th Article, with the promise of the land of Canaan. Yes, is it any otherwise connected than as it stands in the Bible? Would you wish me, in order to accommodate you, to put asunder what God has joined together?

I suppose, Sir, if I had said in general terms, that in this Article, "God promised to be a God to believers and to their *seed*," you would not have complained; but my attempting to affix some specific idea to the expressions, has led you to conclude, that I was "evidently embarrassed." My candid attempts to place the subject in a clear and rational light, and to show the consequence

* 1 Chron. xvi. 13, 15—18.

of admitting the construction given by the Pædobaptists, you insinuate, is only an attempt "adroitly to turn the attention" of my readers from my own embarrassment to the difficulties in which I am attempting to involve them. You add, "Your mazy questions and consequences, following this connexion, *may* have some attention in another place." Is this, Sir, a fair way of disposing of the matter, to tell your readers that your opponent is "embarrassed," and therefore his "mazy questions *may* have some attention in another place?" You know, Sir, and your readers ought to know, that these questions are directly to the point under consideration, and form a material part of my argument on the subject. Why then must an answer to them be put off till some other time and place, when the subject to which they relate will not be so fully recollected? It is quite possible, that some of your uncharitable readers may conjecture, that these "mazy questions and consequences," were a little "embarrassing" to yourself; and may assign this as the reason of your declining to answer them, in connexion with the argument to which they relate. I will only add, I sincerely wish that every reader of this controversy may compare your Xth Letter, particularly the last page of it, with the statement in my Appendix, which he will find in page 172, and the four following; and he will then be able to judge who has discovered the greatest degree of "embarrassment," or displayed the most "adroitness" in attempting to get clear of it.

There is, Sir, one other thing in this Letter that requires to be noticed. You have represented my explanation of the 4th Article of the Abrahamic covenant, as making the land of Canaan the chief, if not the only thing contained in it. Did you forget, or did you overlook in your haste, what I had said on the subject? In the very outset I observed, 'Here are *two* leading ideas in this article. The first is, God's promise *to be a* GOD *to Abraham and his seed.* The second, *to give them the land of Canaan,* (p. 173.) On the first of these I bestowed very particular attention, knowing it was a main pillar in the Pædobaptist theory. To these remarks you have been pleased to give the following reply: "But I will

here, Sir, freely acknowledge, and would do it with gra-
itude, that after all your attempts to darken and dimi-
ish a subject, as clear as it is glorious, and to cast reproac-
upon the believers in this everlasting covenant, I am *on*
of those, who *believe*, that the great promise in view, con-
tains *every thing, that a God of mercy can bestow upon falle*
creatures for time and eternity." No person, I presum-
Sir, wishes to control your *belief*: but what have yo-
proved, more than what I freely conceded? Have yo-
proved, that God promised to be a God in a *saving* and
special sense to all Abraham's natural offspring, or to al-
the natural offspring, or seed, of Gentile believers? I-
not, the subject still remains as *dark* as I left it. Wil-
you presume to say, that God has promised, that all the
natural offspring or seed of Abraham, or of Gentile be-
lievers, shall come to the saving knowledge of the truth?
Or, that he has promised that any who do not come t-
the knowledge of the truth shall be saved? If not, o-
what avail are all your pathetic declarations of what you
"believe." I am not disputing the goodness of you-
heart, but the correctness of your theory.

I do not feel myself chargeable with having retained
only the "mere outward integument or shell;" nor o-
"throwing away the more precious and excellent part o-
this covenant." I think I retain all the important bless-
ings ever promised to Abraham, and to the world; but
I cannot attach them all to the covenant of circumcision.

You suggest, that I view the promises of this covenant
much in "the same *temporal* light," as did the carnal part
of the Jewish nation and church."† Hence you proceed
to ask, "But was it thus with the true *heirs of the prom-*
ises? No, Sir;" you add, "but they *confessed that they*

* 'Natural offspring,' is used in distinction from spiritual seed.

† A respectable Pædobaptist writer gives the following explanation
of the above covenant: "He (i. e. God) made a covenant of *property*
with Abraham, importing, that his seed should be very numerous, and
have Canaan for their inheritance. This he confirmed to Isaac and
Jacob, and of this *circumcision was the seal*; for which reason it is call-
ed *the* covenant." Gen. xiii. 15, 16, 17. xv. 18. xvii. 4—9, 13. Psa. cv.
8—11. Neh. ix. 8." Brown's Script. Dict.

Did this venerable old Presbyterian throw away the more precious
parts of this covenant, and retain only the shell?

were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and they desired a BETTER COUNTRY, *that is, an* HEAVENLY." And did this arise from their different views of the covenant of circumcision, or from their being believers in the promised Messiah? I rest the decision of this important question with an impartial public, and am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XI.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOU commence your XIth Letter, which I am now to consider, by quoting your third head of argument as stated in your Discourses, as follows: 3d. "The covenant made with Abraham *and his seed, is the covenant of which, in the New Testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator, and which is designated as the covenant to be established with the church in the days of the gospel.*"

This proposition, Sir, to me, wears a very doubtful aspect; and were it not that I wish to narrow rather than widen the field of controversy, I might undertake to show its incorrectness. But I shall content myself with only proposing a few things to your consideration.

Few men whose writings I have read, make more frequent complaints that their opponents "assert," but do not "prove," than yourself. I cannot, however, perceive that you have offered any sufficient proof in support of the above proposition. In what way have you made it to appear, that what the Apostle calls *a better covenant which* (he says) *was established upon better promises*, was the Abrahamic covenant? Surely not by producing that, or any part of it, but by citing another mentioned some centuries after in the prophecy of Jeremiah,* and quoted by the Apostle as follows: "*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their*

* Chap. xxxi. 33, Heb. viii. 10.

mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." "This," say you, "is called indeed a NEW covenant." Not because it is really a new one, but "because of its revival and renewal." Neither the prophet, Sir, nor the Apostle have given the least intimation, that an old covenant, that "had been for a long time greatly obscured, and almost lost out of sight," was about to be revived; but declare from the mouth of God, that he would make a NEW COVENANT. The "excellent" Mr. Scott, (as you call him) happens also to differ entirely from you on this point: He says, "Israel as a nation typified the true people of God: the old covenant made with them was typical of the *new covenant* made with all TRUE BELIEVERS AS ONE IN CHRIST. This is not ratified with a nation as such, (though every Christian nation is under a dispensation of mercy, according to this covenant in some things as the Jews were;) but it is *made with Christ the surety*, in behalf of his people, and with each of them personally, as by faith he becomes a member of his mystical body. The moral law was written in tables of stone, and in the book of the law, and put into the *hands* of the Israelites, but they brake it, for want of a spiritual mind, and thus it brought them under condemnation: but according to the *new covenant*, God engages to put "*it into the inward parts, and to write it in the hearts*" of his people: that is, by *regenerating grace* he creates in them a judgment, disposition, and affection congenial to the holy law of love."

After describing the various exercises of the regenerated heart, he adds, "In this way *the Lord becomes their God, and they his people*, prepared for the daily exercise of repentance, faith, humble conscientious obedience, and the spiritual worship of him in his ordinances. It is not needful for persons of this character, to call one another off from idols to the knowledge and worship of Jehovah; nor would they be left to mere human teaching: but the *whole company, from the greatest to the least*, have "an heart given them *so* to know the Lord" as to trust in him, and to cleave to his service."*

* Scott's Notes in loc.

This, Sir, appears to be the genuine sense of the passage. This accords entirely with my views, and with those of my Baptist brethren. But how widely different from your fanciful explanation of the "*renewal*" *of an old covenant?* You certainly will not suspect Mr. Scott of a design against infant baptism. I will repeat the text again, and add your explanation, and the candid will judge which appears the most scriptural. "*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.*" You implicitly say, No. "It is indeed *called* a new covenant, because of its *revival* and *renewal.*" But it is not such in reality. "Unhappily, in this instance, the authority of" the prophet, "the apostle," and the excellent Mr. Scott, "appear to have with you but little weight."

In order to show that you have "conceded to no difference" between the Abrahamic covenant, and the one last mentioned, you "present at large the passage" of your Discourses on which I remarked in my Strictures: but I cannot perceive that you have relieved the subject in the smallest degree. You are pleased to say, that "In the last instance, indeed, there is an *intimation* of a renewal of heart in those with whom the covenant is established." "The same also" (you continue) "was *intimated* at the first establishment of the covenant with Abraham and his seed by the sign of circumcision, which was a *seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith*, and a sacrament significant of a renovation of heart, or *a new creature.*" This, Sir, is the way in which you prove that the Abrahamic covenant, and the one called the NEW COVENANT, are one! If the point is proved, I certainly ought to be satisfied. But whether it be owing to a want of comprehension, or to some other cause, I know not; yet I freely acknowledge, that I cannot see the least shadow of proof in the whole of your statement.

"Circumcision," you say, "was a sacrament, *significant of a renovation* of heart, or *a new creature.*" I am at a loss to know in what sense I am to understand you. Did it signify, that the subjects of this rite were the subjects of *renewing grace*, and that they were actually

new creatures? This I think you will not pretend, inasmuch as the rite was specially to be applied to infants of eight days old. Reason, as well the history of those who were circumcised, forbids this conclusion. Did it signify that those who were circumcised should *ever* certainly experience a renovation of heart, or become new creatures? This conclusion can no more be admitted than the above. It equally fails in point of fact. Did it signify, then, that they *stood in need* of a renovation of heart, in order to enjoy God? Should this be admitted, (and I think it is the utmost that can be admitted) will it prove the tenure of this covenant, to be the same of the new covenant? Most certainly it will not. For while the subjects of the first were at most only taught by circumcision, that their hearts *needed* to be renewed; the new covenant declares, that every individual who is a participant in it, has already *been renovated* and made a *new creature*, and has the law written in his heart; and, in this sense, has no need to be taught to *know* the Lord: for all that are interested in its blessings *know him, from the least even unto the greatest.* I should suppose, Sir, that your own statement, without any comment upon it, would be sufficient to convince every unprejudiced mind, that these covenants are really distinct.

But, Sir, your statement involves another very serious difficulty. You say, "the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, is the covenant of which, in the New Testament, Christ is said to be the Mediator." I am sensible it would be a little mortifying to you, to have it thought that you had not examined your statement in all its bearings. But I confess, Sir, I feel some difficulty in admitting it, and particularly for the following reasons: It is said in the viiith of Hebrews, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a *better covenant*, which was established upon *better promises.*"* Now, Sir, according to your statement, God made this better covenant with

* διαθήκη, the word here translated *covenant*, in the ixth chapter and 15th verse is rendered *testament*. Christ is there said to be the *Mediator of the New Testament*. Was the Abrahamic covenant the New Testament?

Abraham and his seed, which was, as you contend, to be an *everlasting* covenant; and yet, in the short space of four hundred and six years, when they had scarcely began to realize its blessings, he put them under the Sinai covenant, which was far inferior to it! It will be seen, that the "new covenant" of which Christ was Mediator, was distinct from that which the Jewish nation had been under from the days of Moses, which comprehended almost the whole of their national existence? Is it not then perfectly unaccountable, that at the very moment when God was displaying his power, in delivering the seed of Jacob from their cruel bondage, according to his ancient covenant with Abraham; that he should remove them from this better covenant, and place them under one less favourable; and one established on promises not so interesting as that under which they had been, in the days of their exile? Does such a procedure consist with the faithfulness of God to Abraham his "*friend*," or with his promises concerning his seed? The thought is utterly inadmissible.

Is it not plain, Sir, that in the viiith of Hebrews, the Apostle does not contrast the Abrahamic with the Sinai covenant; but the Sinai covenant, comprehending the Abrahamic, with the gospel? Is it not further plain, that the gospel church was now put in possession of much greater and higher privileges than were ever possessed by the Jewish nation? And yet, Sir, these important privileges and blessings are considered by the Apostle only as the fulfilment of what was promised in the new covenant, as recorded by the prophet Jeremiah.

On the whole, Sir, I feel justified in doubting your statement, until you offer some more rational and satisfactory proof, that the "new covenant *to be made* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," was not in fact a new one; but only the renewal of an old one, which had been made with their fathers thirteen hundred and fifty years before. Nor can it be admitted, without clearer evidence than any you have as yet produced, that the Abrahamic covenant was that *better covenant* of which Christ is the Mediator. Whether you

"conceded" to it, or not, there is evidently an important difference between the two.

As further proof that these covenants are one, you proceed to say, "in the Old Testament, a *renovation of heart*, or inward conformity to the law of God, is abundantly *inculcated*." But does this answer to the language and provisions of the new covenant? By no means. It would be unreasonable to suppose, that God should not, under every dispensation, "*inculcate*" the necessity of a "*renewal of heart*." Does it hence follow, that all who were "*sealed* with the sign of circumcision," were renewed persons? You certainly do not believe it yourself. Would it not, Sir, be as reasonable to suppose, that all your congregation are *real* Christians? for I have no doubt but you inculcate upon them the necessity of a "renewal of heart." But the language of the new covenant is very different from all this. Its declarations are absolute. "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, and *will* be their God, and they *shall* be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall *all* know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more." (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.) Hence, Sir, we see that after all your efforts to make out a similarity between this and the covenant of circumcision, there remains a clear and irreconcileable distinction. This distinction must forever remain, unless you can make it appear, that to "inculcate" the necessity of a *renewal of heart*, and the actual possession of a renewed heart, are the same thing.

In noticing my observations upon the word *everlasting*, as used in relation to the covenant of circumcision, instead of proving my statement incorrect, you have presses the passions of your readers with uncommon eloquence and pathos. On supposition, that the covenant of circumcision is abrogated, you exclaim, "Alas! Sir, and what is to become of you and me?—What is to become of the church at large?—What is to become of all the

nations of the earth?" Permit me, Sir, to ask, what has become of the pious patriarchs and others, who died before the covenant of circumcision was in being? I should suppose it would tend greatly to allay your fears, could you believe with me, that although this covenant has *waxen old, and vanished away*, it is succeeded by a *better*, and one *established on better promises*; yea, one of which Jesus Christ himself is the Mediator. In the rich provisions of the latter, dear Sir, I humbly hope we are both interested, although we do not see every thing alike at present. If, through boundless grace, we have been brought to know the Lord, we may indulge this pleasing hope: for *it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.*

The design of the note in my Appendix, on which you have animadverted with so much freedom in this Letter, was principally intended to show, that when the stipulations of a promise, or covenant, are fulfilled, they can be no longer binding on the promiser.

I am sensible that it would be difficult to select a figure which would perfectly illustrate my meaning. Perhaps the following may serve to render the subject more clear. 'A. promises, on condition of the fidelity of B. to his person and interest, at a certain given period to put him in possession of an immense property, sufficient for himself and his heirs for a thousand generations. The period of B.'s probation expires; A. is satisfied, and fulfils his engagement to B. and thus annuls the promissory part of his covenant with him.' Will any one suppose that B. is less happy in the possession of the good promised, than he was in the mere promise of it? This, Sir, is nearly the light in which I view God's engagements to Abraham and his posterity. He has brought on them, and on the nations, the blessings promised. Did he promise Abraham a numerous posterity? he has fulfilled it. Did he promise to give them the land of Canaan for a possession? at the appointed time he gave it to them. Did he promise that in the *Seed* of Abraham all nations should be blessed? the SEED *has come* to whom the promise was made, and the nations are blessed in him. "Behold (said Joshua, in addressing the tribes of Israel,) this

day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: *all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*"* Thus the promise was fulfilled, and the promisees put in actual possession of the good promised.

That covenant was undoubtedly peculiar to that dispensation. If it were not to secure its patronage in favour of infant baptism, it is conceived, that few, if any, would undertake to prove, that the gospel church is still under the administration of that covenant. The Apostle said to the believing Romans, *Ye are not under the law, but under grace.* If so, how can it be believed that the Christian church is still under the covenant of circumcision? This would carry us even back of the Sinai covenant, or ceremonial law, with which that covenant was incorporated. We have indeed thought that we were not under the Jewish, but under the gospel dispensation; that we were now enjoying the blessings of *grace and truth*, as *brought by Jesus Christ.* Believing that *the darkness* of Judaism *was past, and* that *the true light now shineth.*

In my remarks upon the *perpetuity* of the covenant, I observed, that God said to Abraham, "*My covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant.*" Hence in my Strictures, the *mark* of circumcision in the flesh was considered of equal perpetuity with the covenant itself. But you reply, "The 'mark of circumcision' is not said to be an 'everlasting mark;' but the 'mark,' if we must use the word, of an everlasting covenant." This, Sir, is but a mere evasion of the difficulty. Is it not plain beyond a doubt, that when God said his *covenant was in their flesh*, he referred to their *circumcision*, and to nothing else? Was there any thing belonging to the covenant that might be said to be in their flesh excepting the *token?* Nothing, Sir, that the scriptures inform us of. If this *token*, then, has ceased, can it any longer be said that this *everlasting covenant is in their flesh?* Can this be said in truth of any uncircumcised person

* Joshua, xxiii. 14.

If circumcision, as you have uniformly reasoned, was a seal of that everlasting covenant, and essential to its validity, it is difficult to see how the covenant can be kept in force without the seal. For, if a seal be necessary to the validity of an instrument, then that instrument cannot be valid without the seal. The rainbow, for instance, was the *token* of God's covenant with Noah, as *circumcision* was of his covenant with Abraham. Suppose, Sir, that the rainbow should cease, and never more appear. Could it be proved, that the covenant respecting the drowning of the world was still in force? I should suppose, to say the least, that the proof would be very difficult.

The *token* of the Abrahamic covenant has long since ceased, except with the unbelievers in the Messiah. Christ told the Jews that he was *not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.* I am not attempting to destroy the covenant of circumcision, but to show that it has been fulfilled.

To say that baptism now seals the same covenant, which circumcision formerly did, is to *assume* what never has, and, we believe, never can be proved. Baptism, to my recollection, is never said to be the *seal* or *token* of any covenant whatever; but *the answer of a good conscience towards God.* Can it with propriety be said of baptized infants, *My covenant is in your flesh?* Do the Scriptures any where give the least intimation that baptism is a seal of the Abrahamic covenant? If not, shall vain man presume to set aside a *seal* appointed by God, and, without divine authority, substitute another in its room? *He that reproveth God, let him answer it.*

Indulge me, Sir, to bestow a moment's attention upon your last paragraph, and I will relieve your patience for the present. In this you are pleased to say, "notwithstanding all you have thought proper to say to the contrary, I yet firmly believe that God is still the God of Abraham" (and) "his seed, and that *he hath prepared for them a city.*" Probably, Sir, I as firmly believe this, as you do. And I may also add, I as firmly believe that he is the God of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, who all lived, and died long before either Abraham or the covenant of circum-

cision existed. Nor have I said any thing, either directly, or which, by fair implication, can be construed as being contrary to such a belief. The following story I suppose you meant to have understood as proof that I deny that God is still the God of Abraham, viz. that "one of my friends exultingly said, *I* had destroyed the Abrahamic covenant." Who this *friend* is, I know not, nor am I concerned to know: for I do not hold myself accountable for what either my friends or my foes may say. Nor should I have thought, that in a dispute of this nature you would have taken notice of such a vague observation. It was an aphorism of one of the wisest of men, *Take no heed also unto all words,—lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for—thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.* I could easily furnish you with a counterpart to the above observation, from the remarks of some of your injudicious friends, but I see no reason for such a procedure. I only add, I am, Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR XIIth Letter of course now comes under consideration. And I hope to attend to it with all that patience and candour which its importance requires.

After some introductory remarks, you repeat what you call your "*fourth* head of argument," as stated in your Discourses; and to which you add the following observations: "In your Strictures, you have said nothing, as I recollect, directly to this point; but in the third section of your Appendix, without any regard to the arguments exhibited to prove that the *post-Christian* church is only a continuation, under a new dispensation, of the *pre-Christian*, you attempt to prove that it is not."

It is true, Sir, I did not take notice, distinctly, of your arguments to prove the identity of what you call the *p*

and *post* Christian church; for I did not consider myself, in this section, as writing a reply to your book.

In this Letter, Sir, you commence your examination of my arguments to prove the difference between the Jewish and Christian churches. "But careful though you have been," say you, "to keep *our proofs* out of sight——your *arguments*, in this section, I shall endeavour directly to meet and answer."

My first argument was intented to show, that the two churches '*differ essentially in their constitutions*.' I stated briefly what I understood to be the constitution of the Jewish church, in which it was considered to consist of 'those primary laws, by which they were united and distinguished, as an ecclesiastical body.' 'These laws,' it was further observed, 'contain——the qualifications which constitute the right of membership.' It was added, 'Circumcision holds the first and most important place in this system. This formed the discriminating line between the members of this church and all others. It was the initiating badge of membership; for no male of the seed of Abraham, nor any others, could be admitted to the privileges of that church without it.' This, Sir, is the way in which I explained my meaning, that '*circumcision held the first and most important place in that system*.' But after detaching the sentence, you have given it a very different and widely extended meaning from what I intended. If you will be at the trouble to examine it again, you will perceive that it was predicated on the sentence immediately preceding, viz. the 'qualifications which constitute the right of membership.'

That the force of my statement may be perceived, you will permit me to ask, Whether Job, or Melchizedeck, or any other person, however holy they might be, could have been admitted to the special privileges of that church, without being circumcised? It is plain they could not. It must hence have been obvious to you, Sir, that in this sense I considered its importance. When my statement is seen in its fair connexion, I am persuaded it will not be censured as erroneous. Had you considered it candidly, in the light which I meant it to be taken, you might have spared all your labour to prove

that Abraham, and some of his posterity, were heirs to blessings more important than circumcision.

Your next attempt is, to shew the incorrectness of the following statement in my Strictures, viz. 'to constitute a person a complete member of the Jewish church, required nothing more, than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised.' "This, Sir," you reply, "is an assertion, which I believe can never be proved!" If it were doubtful in your mind, Sir, why did you not disprove it? You have had a fair opportunity, and made a very laboured, but unsuccessful attempt. You have, to be sure, asked a great many questions, and told us what you "believe," and what you do "not believe:" but all this is very far from disproving the fact.

"But perhaps," say you, "by a 'complete member,' you did not mean a *true* member, but only a person visibly entitled to all the external rights and privileges of the church." This is a distinction that the gospel knows nothing about. A man that is 'a complete member,' and "entitled to all the external rights and privileges of the church," must be, as far as we are able to judge, a "*true* member." Whenever we have sufficient evidence to prove that he is not a *true* member, we have sufficient evidence to deprive him of his "external privileges." Hence I am willing to say (for I wish to be explicit) that by a 'complete member,' I meant one who, by the constitution of the Jewish church, had a lawful visible standing in it, and had a right to all the privileges and immunities of such a standing.

Your attempts to embarrass the subject by the above unjustifiable distinction between a *complete* member and a *true* one, is a difficulty entirely of your own making. And as you have asked a great many questions relative to it, you will have the goodness, Sir, to indulge me to ask one, and I will then pass on. My question is simply this, Whether a person who is 'a *complete* member' in the Tabernacle church, under your pastoral care, is not, in your view, a "true member?" If you should answer in the negative, we must content ourselves to re-

main ignorant of the difference until you explain it to us.

It is really surprising, Sir, to me, that you should not have perceived, that all your arguments to prove that more was required, in order to membership in the Jewish church, than was allowed by me, "go wide of the point." They only serve to show, that God, at different times, and on different occasions, repeated his requirements to the whole nation of Israel, to obey his commands. But this can no ways affect the question in dispute, unless it can be proved, that this obedience was previously required in order to their membership.

But, Sir, your scripture proof, as "this is the judge that must end the strife," shall now be more particularly considered. "Different as the forms might be," say you, "there was, nevertheless, a *public profession*, a public and formal *consent* to the covenant, necessary to *complete* membership under the former dispensation as under the present. Accordingly, in the xxxi*st* of Deuteronomy, we have on record a *standing order* to this effect." What can be plainer than all this? This "standing order," you predicate upon a transaction recorded in the xxix*th* chapter. That this is wholly irrelevant, will sufficiently appear from the following considerations:—First, the covenant, as it is called, which the people of Israel were here called upon to keep, was not the covenant made with Abraham formerly, but one now to be made with themselves. It reads thus; *These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses* TO MAKE *with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.** But had the Abrahamic covenant been the one intended in the above text, it must still be evident, that this transaction was not in the remotest sense intended as the criterion of membership. To deny this, would be implicitly to say, that none of all the tribes were *complete* members before. For Moses said, *Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, your* CAPTAINS *of your tribes, your* ELDERS, *and your* OFFICERS, *with* ALL THE MEN *of Israel.* Were none of these, Sir, "*complete members*" before? And

* Deut. xxix. 1.

are we to admit this as your proof that they made a "public profession under the former dispensation," amounting to the same as required "under the present?" I should almost as soon conceive that a man would argue, that the whole Commonwealth of Massachusetts made a public profession of religion, when their Delegates in Convention, in framing the *Bill of Rights*, declared the "public worship of God" to be *essential* to the "preservation of civil government, and to the happiness of a people."

But, Sir, another difficulty, and one which must prove fatal to your argument, is yet to be noticed. If "a public profession, a public and formal consent to the covenant [were] necessary to complete membership under the former dispensation," as you assert to be the case; and if the tribes, when assembled on the plains of Moab, made this public profession; then it unavoidably follows, that *their* LITTLE ONES, *the stranger that was in their camp, with the hewers of wood, and drawers of water*, all made a public profession, and were all made "complete members!" But this proves too much, and so destroys your argument.

To the above transaction you refer as a "standing order," for completing the membership of such as were to come into full communion with the Jewish church. But can any qualifications be perceived in a great part of the congregation collected on the plains of Moab, different from those stated by me? Had their *little ones* any thing more to constitute them members, than that 'they were born of Jewish parents, and circumcised?' Or do you suppose they gave their "formal consent to the covenant," by proxy; by means of god-fathers and god-mothers, as some Pædobaptists have admitted infants in later times to baptism?

The passage which you have quoted from Deut. xxxi. 9—13. as a "standing order" of that church, requiring a public profession in all who were to be considered as complete members, is conceived to be wholly irrelevant. It only proves, that "*Moses wrote this law*, (not the Abrahamic covenant) and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant

of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read *this law* before all Israel in their hearing." Really, Sir, I should suppose a man must possess a very luxuriant imagination, to see in this direction, simply requiring the Levites to "read the law before all Israel," once in seven years; a "standing order," requiring "a public profession, and formal consent to the covenant" of circumcision, with a view to complete the membership of such as had been circumcised in infancy.

You have carried your argument, Sir, (for such I feel a pleasure in calling it) to a very great length, in saying, that "in this public profession, in thus *personally* and solemnly consenting to the covenant, they severally engaged to walk after the Lord *with all the heart*." Remarkable assertion! Do you seriously believe, Sir, that the whole nation of Israel, including their *little ones*, did *personally engage* to walk after the Lord? If indeed you do, I must leave you to enjoy your opinion; but I must be indulged to say, that I can see no evidence of it in the proofs you have exhibited.

From the quotations, which we have thus briefly noticed, you proceed exultingly to ask, "But was there in all this, Sir, nothing more than being bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and circumcised?" I readily answer, there undoubtedly was. But the question is, What is this to the point? Was all this required as a pre-requisite for membership? God enjoined upon Abraham to walk before him and be perfect; but could no person be a complete member of the Jewish church whose walk deviated from perfection? The qualifications for membership, and the duties enjoined on them, as members, in visible standing, it must be obvious, are, in many respects, different requirements.

If a "public profession, a public and formal consent to the covenant," as you argue, "were necessary to complete membership;" then we should suppose, for this very

reason, infants could not be members, nor entitled to the privileges and blessings which were secured to others as such. The fact appears to be this: A great part of the assembly, which stood before the Lord on the plains of Moab, were complete members of that church before, as far as we have any rules to judge by; and a considerable part were not such afterwards, if your argument be correct.

Your argument respecting the relation that "circumcised children" stood in to the church, as being "*analogous* to that in which children, whose names are enrolled in the public records as born in this Commonwealth, are members of the civil community," appears extremely defective. For such a child is as really a subject of the Commonwealth as the father, and the law takes cognizance of him as such. It is true, that during his minority, *he is under tutors and governors until the time* appointed for him to exercise the rights of citizenship. But, Sir, is there any *change of heart*, any oath of allegiance, any "formal consent" to the Constitution of the Commonwealth required of him, in order to his being considered a complete member of it? I believe you will not pretend that there is. Hence, if "circumcised children were members, in a sense analogous to this," nothing was wanting to complete their membership but mature age. A man-child born in this Commonwealth, and living in it until he is twenty-one years old, becomes to all intents a member, even without his "formal consent;" nor can he prevent it, but by leaving the jurisdiction.

"What more," you ask, "does God now require in order to complete membership in his church than he anciently did?" The sacred scriptures will, I believe, furnish a satisfactory answer. "Anciently" being children of Abraham was a sufficient qualification for membership; but now, *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* Were not these very persons, whom John thus addressed, members of the Jewish church? And was there nothing required of them now more than under the former dispensation? You must certainly see

that there was. Was not the Ethiopian eunuch a proselyte of the Jewish religion, and at the time when Philip met him returning from Jerusalem, where he had been to worship? Is it not hence reasonable to suppose, that he had been admitted into that church with all their accustomed formalities? I now ask, Did Philip require nothing more of him than what had been required in order to admittance into the Jewish church? If he did, your reasoning is wholly refuted.

I have not been able to perceive, that either repentance, or faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or even a profession of them were required by the ancient dispensation, in order to complete membership in the Jewish church. But no person, not even a descendant of Abraham, has a right to admission into the gospel church, without explicitly making such a profession. To deny this, would be equally as absurd as to deny, that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is essential to constitute a man a Christian.

As we now live under a "different dispensation," which, as has been shown, requires qualifications for membership essentially different from those required under the former dispensation; and as there is also an essential "difference in the outward rites and forms" of the church, it is by no means clear to us, that "the church is the same;" or that the Jewish church was the ancient Zion which God promised to *make an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations*, as noticed in the close of your Letter.

It may be proper for a moment to inquire, what is meant by the term Zion. The word, as used in the sacred scriptures, has several different significations. At first it signified no more than the strong hold of Zion, which David took from the Jebusites. (See 2 Sam. v. 7.) As the temple was afterwards erected upon this mountain or hill, it was hence called, by way of eminence, the *holy mountain*, or *holy hill of Zion*. And as the tribes assembled here for their worship, the house, and at length, the people, were, by a common figure of speech, called Zion. The term in prophetic language has a still more extended signification; and is sometimes used to signify all the spiritual worshippers belonging to

the true church of God, comprising the whole body of believers. This appears to be the Zion, to which special spiritual promises were made, and which were to be fulfilled under the gospel dispensation.

Agreeably to the above, the Apostle distinguished the gospel or spiritual Zion, from the literal or legal one. *For*, said he to the believing Hebrews, *ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire; &c. but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, &c.* meaning not the literal mount Zion, (for this might be as easily touched as mount Sinai;) but the spiritual church-state under the gospel dispensation.

Is it not manifest also, that the Apostle, in his allegory respecting Hagar and Sarah, had reference to the old Jewish church as it then existed, and to the true gospel church as existing at the same time, but as entirely distinct from it, as Hagar, Abraham's maid-servant, was from Sarah his true and lawful wife? *The first*, he says, *answereth to Jerusalem, that now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.* All who? I should suppose the answer must be, *All true believers*, and none else.

If *Jerusalem and her children*, in this allegory, did not mean the Jewish church, as distinguished from the gospel, it is difficult to see the propriety of the Apostle's reasoning. And if, like *Hagar* and her *son*, this church and her children were to be cast out from the gospel church and its privileges, it is totally inconceivable how they should be one! The gospel church is not the daughter of the earthly Jerusalem, but of the heavenly. *Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.*

We hence see, that the gospel church is not descended from the old Jewish *Jerusalem*, but from the heavenly: or, in other words, is of heavenly origin, being *born from above.* (John iii. 3.)†

* Gal. iv. 23—26. The bond-woman, and the free-woman, (he tells us) are the two covenants or testaments. διαθηκαι. Hæc enim sunt duo testamenta.

† εαν μη τις γεννηθη ανωθεν. *Unless a man be born from above.*

You will, perhaps, to ward off the force of my argument, charge me again, as you have often done before, with speaking disrespectfully of the "ancient Zion of God." Nothing, I can assure you, can be further from my heart, than such a design; but with my present light on the subject, it would be impossible to subscribe to your views of it, without belying my own conscience.

I am, Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XIII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

HAVING in my last, considered the evidence exhibited by you in favour of your position, that under the Jewish dispensation "a public profession, a public and formal consent to the covenant," was required in order to complete membership in that church; I now with pleasure proceed to some remarks upon your XIIIth Letter. In this you attempt to destroy the force of the arguments which I brought to prove the gospel church to be distinct from the Jewish.

My second argument was stated as follows: 'The Jewish church in every stage of it was national, but the gospel church is selected and particular.' To this you reply, "the fact is simply this: for two thousand years from the beginning to the call of Abraham, the church of God, built upon the first GOSPEL PROMISE, was continued in the domestic or family state. In the days of Abraham, a new dispensation commenced. From that era, for about two thousand years more, the Lord was pleased so to order it in his special providence that his church, still resting on the same *gospel promise*, but more clearly revealed, should dwell compactly together; and being in that situation, they were necessarily associated in a civil as well as ecclesiastical capacity. Their civil state, however, was one thing, and their ecclesiastical state was distinctly another."

This, Sir, is your statement entire, respecting the pre-Christian church, as you call it, in opposition to what I had attempted to support. But how does this prove that the Jewish church was not national, and, as such, clearly distinguished from the gospel church? It does not, I conceive, prove it at all.

But to examine the subject more particularly: "For two thousand years," you observe, "the church was in a family or domestic state; and that this church was built upon the first *gospel promise*." If built upon this promise, Sir, it must have been a body of true believers; for none else ever did build upon this promise. If these believers could with propriety be called a *visible church*, it must be, I should suppose, because they were *visibly associated together*. For we can no more conceive of a *visible* church without an association of its members, than of a house while the materials for the building are scattered in the forest.

But where, Sir, do we find any such body of people associated, even in a "domestic or family state?" Through that long range of two thousand years, from Adam to Abraham, the Bible exhibits only here and there a solitary individual, unconnected with each other. A church united in the truth may very fitly be compared to a city *that is set on an hill, which cannot be hid*. But these holy men were so few, and placed at such a great distance from each other, that they bore a much greater resemblance to the few lights which are scattered along an immense distance of sea-coast, for the direction of the benighted mariner, than to the collected light of a city.

What do you mean, Sir, by the church, which you tell us, "from the beginning, to the call of Abraham, was in the domestic or family state?" Are we to understand you, that there was in fact any visible, united body of professed believers? or do you mean, what is commonly understood, by the invisible, or universal church, comprising all true believers? If the latter, I shall not dispute the point a single moment, as it does not in the least affect the argument. But if you meant the former, it was certainly incumbent on you, in a matter of so much importance in this dispute, to have done something more than

merely to assert. Had you made it to appear from the sacred scriptures, that during the period alluded to, any body of believers were united in visible church order, it would have had a distant bearing upon my argument; but in its present form, I cannot see that it has the least.

With respect to the Jewish church, you inform us, "their *civil* state was one thing, and their *ecclesiastical* state was distinctly another." Here, as in the above case, you have left us to find out, if we can, in what sense the Jewish church was distinct from the state. You tell us it was so, but have saved yourself the labour of proving it. I believe it has been the general opinion of all who are conversant in the scriptures, that if ever church and state were entirely blended in any nation, it was among the Jews under their *Theocracy*. Were not their *civil* and *ecclesiastical* laws, as well as their rulers, every where blended? and were not the violations of both punished by the same authority? But to come more directly to the point; Was there any body of religious professors among the Jews, which, by divine direction, acted independently of the nation as a civil community? When you make this appear from the sacred scriptures, your statement will be admitted, and not before.

I shall hence consider it as an undeniable fact, until the contrary is proved, that there never was, under any dispensation, any regular body of believers united together in visible church order, in distinction from the nation with which they were connected, until the commencement of the church under the gospel dispensation.

To show that the gospel church is distinct from the Jewish national church, I asserted, that it was 'composed of none but professed believers.' In answer to this, you have thought proper to say; "in the same sense, Sir, that this is true, with respect to the *post*-Christian church, it is also true, with respect to the *pre*-Christian." I had really thought, Sir, (however some of your brethren may believe and practise) that you considered none as properly qualified for church membership, who did not give evidence of their saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, and willing subjection to his government. But, Sir, I must give up this opinion, respecting your orthodoxy, if you still in-

sist that the confession made on the plains of Moab by the whole nation of Israel, including all their infants, was the same for substance as that which was required of the converts in order to join the apostolic church; and consequently the same as you require, in order to admission into the church under your pastoral care. In the former case, certainly a considerable proportion of the nation must have professed by proxy, if at all. If this be admitted as gospel rule, why may not the representatives of a nation make a profession for the whole?

It may be proper here to just to notice, what you are pleased to say, I have "explicitly conceded." In order to make out that the members of the Jewish church made a profession of the same import of that which the gospel requires, you have attempted to make me acknowledge the fact, though in direct contradiction of the sentiment I was endeavouring to support! "As difficult (say you) as it may be to reconcile the concession with the general tenor of your book; yet you yourself have *explicitly conceded*, that *the Jews as a nation, professed to be his (Christ's) people.*" I apprehend, Sir, there is no real difficulty in reconciling what you here consider as a "concession," with the general tenor of my book, nor with a denial of your statement of the sameness of profession under the Jewish and Christian dispensations. Were an intelligent American traveller inquired of, at Canton or Constantinople, respecting the religion of his country, and he should answer, that '*the Americans, as a nation, professed to be Christians,*' would any man not under the influence of strong prejudice conclude, that he meant to convey the idea, that the American nation individually made a solemn profession of their faith in Christ, "the same for substance" as is required in order to fellowship in a particular church? I should certainly suppose not. At any rate, it was my meaning to convey this specific idea, that the Jewish nation, taken collectively, acknowledged the true God, and the prophecies concerning the Messiah; that they, in this sense, professed to worship God, and to be his people. I will only add one remark more on this head; and that is, it must have been obvious to you, that in

both places where you suppose me to have conceded that the Jews generally made a profession, I considered it in the same general sense only as a *hypocritical profession*. It will hence follow, that, if my words can be tortured into a "concession," it will simply amount to this, that Christians under the gospel dispensation, are only required to make the same *hypocritical profession* of religion which the Jews did, who, notwithstanding, could oppose and crucify the true Messiah.

I proceed to consider the manner in which you dispose of my third argument. This was founded on those scriptures, 'which represent the gospel church, as commencing at a different period from the ancient church.'

In explaining that noted prophecy, Dan. xii. 44. in order that it might be clearly seen that I had not explained it under the influence of party feelings, I gave it in the words of the late Bishop Newton, who could not possibly be suspected. This quotation is so full and decisive in favour of my argument, that it needs no comment. In the days of these kings, i. e. one of them, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom. "Accordingly (says the Bishop) the kingdom of Christ was set up during the days of the last of these kingdoms, that is, the Roman." This, you argue, was not the commencement of the gospel church, but of the gospel dispensation! According to this argument, the gospel church existed centuries before the gospel dispensation commenced! Is not this, Sir, a very singular mode of reasoning? A gospel church, completely organized, under a *ceremonial* and *legal dispensation!* If the church, from Abraham to to Christ, was really the gospel church, what possible reason can be assigned why that period should not also belong to the gospel dispensation? I have always thought that the gospel church took its name and character from the dispensation under which it commenced.

Your application of a part of the quotation which I made from Dr. Fuller, is of little consequence to your argument; as it must be clear to you, and to every other person, I should suppose, that the Doctor differs very materially from you, with respect to that *spiritual kingdom* which was set up among the Jews. If

you will be at the trouble to read the whole of the quotation and *note*, by which he explains his meaning, I think you will be satisfied, that his views and yours by no means correspond. I have never seen any thing in his writings which led me to suppose, that he considered the Jewish and gospel churches one, any more than I do. That true believers are, in some sense, the same, whether found among the Antediluvians, before Abraham, or among his posterity; whether among Turkish slaves, or in a regularly embodied church state, no one will dispute. But a church, in the common acceptation of the word, is a body of men and women collected together in a *visible state*; at least, this is the only church about which we contend.

In order to weaken my argument, you presume to say, that though the setting up of the gospel church was spoken of by Daniel, as an event then future, it meant no more than the introduction of a new dispensation. You have here made a second attempt to prove, that by an unguarded concession, "strange as it might seem," I had "adopted this same explanation." Strange indeed, unless I had lost my senses, that I should concede the very point I was strenuously opposing. But, Sir, if you will but candidly peruse the page from which you have made the extract, you will see that you have totally misaken my meaning. Did I not connect with the gospel dispensation, '*all its privileges and blessings?*'* It must be obvious then, that when I used the term *dispensation*, I meant to include every thing connected with, and belonging to it.

To suppose that the prophecy, *that in the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom*, &c. meant no more than "the commencement of a new dispensation," without a kingdom peculiar to itself, is a sentiment which never entered my imagination.

By what you remark, in the very next page in this same Letter, it seems plain that you understood me in a different light from what you have represented me above. "Doubtless (say you) no Christian believes, that false

* Page 200.

professors and hypocrites, such as were the Scribes and Pharisees, are fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven. But is it not a melancholy fact, that many such there are, even in the visible *gospel church?*" As this was said by way of concession to my argument, it is plain that you understood me to mean, by the *gospel kingdom*, the gospel church as well as dispensation. The Scribes and Pharisees, and all other sinners, are fit subjects of the latter as thus distinguished, but not of the former; that is, they are not excluded from the gospel as a dispensation of mercy, but have no right in the church.

The next thing in this Letter, which demands consideration, is, the manner in which you dispose of an objection which I made in the following words: 'It would be an insult upon the understanding of men to attempt to maintain the two opposite points, that new-born infants must be admitted to membership in the Christian church, and that the church was nevertheless not of this world but a spiritual body.' To this you reply, "But do I mistake, or is it in fact true, that the same DIVINE PERSON, who said, *My kingdom is not of this world;* also said, *Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me,* FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

I have no doubt, Sir, but it afforded you much self-complacency to think, that by one potent blow you had so effectually silenced my objection. What a happy thought! How exactly apposite to the case!—But, Sir, men that are accustomed to reasoning as you are, will not certainly be led by mere sounds, as you suppose me to have been in a former case; but will examine a question in all its bearings, so as to be satisfied, that the answer is conclusive. If the words of our blessed Lord, as quoted by you, go to refute the statement which I made, they must be understood in the following light; namely, "That new-born infants are SPIRITUAL *persons*, and, for this reason, belong, or have a right to the kingdom of heaven." But, Sir, this would prove too much for you; for you do not allow even the infants of believers to be members of the Christian church, that is *complete* members, entitled to all the privileges of the church.* It is

* P. 59, 60.

true, that in my statement, I did not distinguish the infants of believing parents from others, for I considered them to be born after the flesh as really as others. But, Sir, your application of the passage involves some further difficulties. If any infants are born into the world *spiritual*, they must fall from that state, or they can never need renewing by the Spirit of God. Do you, my dear Sir, teach the children of your charge, even such as descend from pious parents, that they were born into the world in a *spiritual* state, and therefore qualified for church membership? That they need only to persevere in that *spiritual* condition in which they commenced the career of life, and they will be sure of the kingdom of heaven? I cannot think you do. From your sentiments, I imagine it probable, that you sometimes lead such children to suppose, that they stand in a more favoured situation than others; that God is some way bound to them, if baptized, in a sense that he is not to others: but after all, I conclude you treat with them, not as spiritual persons, but as sinners, which need the power of renewing grace, as well as all others. By your permission, Sir, I will take the liberty to vary my statement a little, and submit it again to your consideration. 'A man who can believe that infants are born in a state of *total moral depravity*, and, at the same time, maintain that they are in a spiritual condition, and so fit for the kingdom of heaven, can find but little difficulty in believing transubstantiation, or any other absurdity.'

I hope, Sir, I feel a sacred regard for the declaration of Christ, mentioned above; but I can never consent to an application of it which contradicts both scripture and fact.

I have only to notice the manner in which you close this Letter, and I will then dismiss it. "Hitherto (say you) we have found in your arguments, *(for so we must call them,)* nothing of the least avail to your point." On this I have but one remark to make. If it be such an insupportable tax upon your candour, to allow my reasonings to be deserving of the name of *argument*, you are at liberty to call them by any other name you may think more proper.

I am, dear Sir, very respectfully, your's, &c.

LETTER XIV.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I PROCEED, now, to a consideration of your XIVth Letter. Your first object in this, is to get rid of the evidence arising from my 4th and last argument, to prove that the Jewish and Christian churches are not the same. This evidence was drawn from 'facts recorded in the New Testament,' and went to prove that the gospel church and Jewish were distinct. Here, Sir, you very "seriously" tell us, "If it would not have the appearance of burlesque," (it is best, to be sure, to save appearances,) "and would my limits permit, I should be strongly inclined to transcribe the whole which you have thought proper to offer under this head, as a sample of your *spirit* and *manner* of reasoning." I could wish, Sir, with all my heart, you had transcribed it entire; for this would have given your readers a fair view of, at least, one of my arguments, which I think they will rarely find in your book. However strong your fears might have been in the outset, lest your remarks should have the "appearance of burlesque," it is evident, they had pretty much subsided before you had finished your two following paragraphs.

As if, in compliance with my request, to examine carefully the third chapter of Matthew, you ask, "And what, Sir, shall we find in the third chapter of Matthew? Why, truly, that *John preached in the wilderness of Judea*; and that *Jesus was baptized of John* AT *Jordan.*" "These," say you, "are the *simple facts* to which you are pleased to call our attention, as proof, that the church under the present dispensation, 'is totally distinct and independent of' the ancient Jewish church!" And then exclaim, "stubborn facts indeed!"

By your management, Sir, you have concealed from your readers entirely, what I endeavoured to make plain to mine. Not indeed the "simple facts," that John preached in the wilderness of Judea, and baptized Jesus *at* Jordan. (You did not mean, I suppose IN Jordan,

but near it? for, in all probability, if he had been baptized *in* Jordan, it would have been said, that he *went up straightway* OUT OF THE WATER.*) The simple facts contained in this chapter, considered by themselves, were never supposed to prove the point for which they were adduced; but were necessarily to be considered as the beginning of a series of facts, which, taken together, afford, in my judgment, ample proof of the point in question. This chapter, Sir, was particularly fixed upon, because it contains the first visible operations of the new dispensation. It presents us with the harbinger of Christ *crying in the wilderness*, agreeably to ancient prophecy, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*. It informs us particularly of his doctrine and baptism; and of the place where, and the manner in which our blessed Lord himself was baptized. And as you allow, Sir, that a new dispensation (if not a new church) was now commencing, it is easy to see, that much more depended on the account given in this chapter, than the "simple facts that John preached in the wilderness of Judea, and baptized Christ at Jordan."

Your observations in reply to what I said respecting John's authority, &c. I pass unnoticed, excepting the following. I asked, 'Was there any institution, or even custom in the Jewish church, which required John to baptize his converts in Jordan?' You are pleased to answer by asking, "And was there any institution, or even custom in the Jewish church, which required Ezra to establish synagogues for divine worship in all parts of Judea?" I must freely confess, Sir, I know of none; nor did I know before, that a divine institution was ever thought necessary to authorize the building of a synagogue, any more than a school-house. What an astonishing association of ideas! The building of a synagogue, contrasted with the *divine* institution of baptism! What a happy thought! "Is this argument, Sir?"

After placing before your readers the principal texts which I brought, to show the manner in which Christ first collected his gospel church together, you imagine, I suppose, that I have incautiously made another conces-

* Matt. iii. 16.

sion, which you notice in the following manner. "Really, Sir," say you, "I supposed it was your opinion, that the 'gospel church' commenced three or four years prior to any of 'these facts,' under the ministry of John." A moment's recollection, Sir, would have relieved you from your surprise. For you will observe, that these facts commenced *with* the ministry of John. It is true, I have really supposed, and do still suppose, that the gospel dispensation commenced with John's ministry, and consequently that his baptism belonged to this dispensation. But I am not conscious, that either I, or my brethren, ever contended, that the 'gospel church' was organized before the commencement of the personal ministry of Christ. As far as I recollect the general sentiments of the Baptists, they consider John as *preparing the way before the face of the Messiah, and making ready a people for him*, which, under his immediate direction, were brought into an organized state.

From facts recorded in the New Testament, after the most careful examination, I was led to the conclusion, that Jesus and his disciples, composing the New Testament church, 'stood totally unconnected with the old Jewish church.' To this you are pleased to reply: "We had understood, that Jesus taught those who followed him, that as *the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, what they said was to be observed*, though their works were not to be approved." This is your proof, Sir, that Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees were in union! But if Christ here meant to teach his disciples to *observe and do* what the Pharisees taught for doctrine, because they sat in Moses' seat; I should be glad to be informed what he meant, when he told them to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*,* which the disciples afterwards understood to be their doctrine. Or why he should say of them, *Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind.*† Did he mean to have his followers led by blind guides? I am rather inclined to think, with Dr. Lightfoot, that by sitting in Moses' seat, meant "the chair of magistracy, rather than the doctrinal chair." I am strengthened in this opinion, because that in this same chapter I find,

* Matt. xvi. 6, 12. and Mark viii. 15. † Matt. xv. 14.

that wo upon wo are heaped on the Scribes and Pha-
sees, for their corrupt teaching.*

Whatever proof, therefore, your quotation might othe-
ways be thought to afford, that Christ and his discipl-
stood in church relation to the Scribes and Pharisees,
entirely done away in what he said immediately afte-
when addressing these very characters. Reflect, my de-
Sir, I beseech you, a moment on this pointed addres-
*Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye sh-
up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go
yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*
Did Christ mean to instruct his followers to *observe an-
do* according to the religious instructions of these haugh-
ecclesiastics, who would neither enter into his gospel kin-
dom themselves, nor suffer others to enter, if they cou-
possibly hinder them? I should certainly suppose ye-
would acknowledge the contrary.

From any fair construction, then, which may be put u-
on the above passage, I conceive no argument can b-
drawn in favour of a union between the gospel and Jew-
ish church, any more than between Christians and P-
gans; because Paul exhorted the former to *obey magistrate-*
stiling them *God's ministers*, although they were heathe-
idolaters.

You are pleased to add, as further proof of this unio-
"that both he (Christ) and his disciples, constantly a-
tended on the synagogue worship, on the solemn feast-
of the *church at Jerusalem*, &c." Really, Sir, it appea-
to me, you are in a likely way to prove much more tha-
you wished to do. If your observations prove any thin-
they prove, that Christ and his disciples held communio-
not only with "*the sound part, those who were Jews in-
wardly*," but with *that church* as a visible body, and th-
too in its most corrupt state! To what astonishing lengt-
you seem willing, Sir, to go, in order to try to carry yo-
point! But such efforts as these will only serve to re-
der your theory more suspicious with every conscien-
tious person.

That Christ frequently taught in the Jewish syn-
gogues will be readily admitted; but did this prove th-

* Matt. xxiii. 13, to the end.

he acted in union with their church? Did they, as a church, ever receive and acknowledge him as a teacher sent from God? Or did he, on any occasion, give them visible fellowship as a true gospel church? Paul and Barnabas went into a synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, on the Sabbath-day, and after leave was granted them by the ruler, they addressed the people. But does this prove that the Apostles considered the Jews of that synagogue as a branch of the Christian church? As this was upon the Jewish Sabbath, might it not be urged, with equal propriety, to prove that the Apostles still regarded the seventh day as the Christian Sabbath? That the ceremonial law had not entirely ceased until the death of Christ, no one pretends. It was therefore to be expected, that both he and his disciples would pay such attention to the solemn *feasts* enjoined by that law, as the then state of things rendered proper. But can you prove that Christ and his disciples ever celebrated those feasts in union with the Jewish church? Is not the contrary apparent? Does not the manner in which he celebrated the last passover before he suffered, afford sufficient proof on this point? Here we behold Jesus, with his disciples *only*, in an *upper room*, celebrating the paschal institution for the last time. No member of the Jewish church was a participant with them.

That some of the professed followers of Christ retained, under the gospel dispensation, some things that were purely Jewish, and that too after they were abrogated and ought to have been left, must be acknowledged. Thus some of them contended for circumcision. Paul consented to *purify* himself in the temple, in compliance with the injudicious advice of some of his brethren. If the Apostles could get an opportunity to preach the gospel to their brethren according to the flesh, who were strongly prejudiced against this new doctrine, by going into their synagogues, they readily went. But no fair inference can hence be drawn, that the Jewish and Christian churches were united.

Passing over a number of things which are evidently incorrect, I hasten to consider your remarks upon a very important point in this controversy. In my Appendix,

it is said, that the Pædobaptists 'uniformly argu[e] that the Jewish and Christian churches are the sam[e] and that the latter is no more than a continuance of th[e] former: but they have never shown us when, wher[e] or how the latter church was connected with the forme[r] and it is believed that they never can. They have seem[ed] wholly to step over this point.'

To this you reply with peculiar emphasis. "Ho[w] was it possible, Sir, for such an assertion to drop fro[m] your pen? Have we not constantly shewn that the co[v]enant of the church, under the ancient dispensation, a[nd] under the present has been always the same?" Yo[u] have constantly asserted it. But this, Sir, you very we[ll] know, is merely begging the question: that is, if yo[u] mean, as you undoubtedly do, the Abrahamic covenan[t]. You proceed: "That the church has, in all ages, be[en] *built on the same foundation of the Apostles and prophe[ts] Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*" Not [at] all to the point, Sir. It only proves, that believers in t[he] ages that preceded Abraham's covenant, under that di[s]pensation, and since it has ceased, have all built the[ir] hopes upon Christ the sure foundation; but gives [no] more evidence of the union of the two churches in di[s]pute, than that pope Leo the Xth, and Martin Luth[er] were united, because they both professed to build [on] Jesus Christ and his Apostles. Continuing your repl[y], you add, "When *the middle wall of partition was brok[en] down, the Gentiles became fellow-heirs* with God's ancie[nt] people, *and of the same body and partakers of the promise [in] Christ in the gospel.*" Here you have slidden softly by th[e] difficulty, and given us parts of two passages of Scriptur[e], interlarded and altered, in order to carry your point; but when candidly examined, they fail of affording yo[u] any proof. The first part of this quotation stands thus: *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath brok[en] down the middle wall of partition between us.** Now, Sir, to make this text say one word in favour of your argu[-]ment, it must mean that the *wall of partition* between th[e] Jewish church, considered as such, and the Gentile co[n]-

* Eph. ii. 14.

verts, was *broken down*; whereas, the fact appears to be, that it was only so between *believing Jews* and *believing Gentiles*, without any reference to the Jewish church, which by a vast majority still kept up this *wall of separation*. The other passage stands thus, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the* SAME BODY, *and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel.** Nothing in the context, it is conceived, will justify the conclusion, that by the *same body*, the Apostle meant or had any allusion to the old Jewish church; but rather the body of believers, which he calls a *new man*. *Having*, saith he, *abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make* IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN. *And that he might reconcile* BOTH *unto God,* IN ONE BODY BY THE CROSS, *having slain the enmity thereby.*† After a few observations more equally irrelevant, you come to your conclusion, and ask, "And is there nothing in all this, Sir, which shows 'when, how, or where the *post*-Christian church was connected with the *pre*-Christian?" Really, Sir, I must beg you to excuse my dulness; for, I assure you, that I can see nothing "in all this" which amounts to the least degree of positive proof. I must still say, that it appears to me, you either do not see the true ground of the objection, or that you are unwilling fairly to meet it.

"Have we not," say you, "constantly shewn, that the covenant of the church under the ancient dispensation, and under the present, has been always the same?" And may I not reply, Have *we* not as constantly shewn you, that the gospel church is founded upon a *new* and *better covenant, established upon better promises?*

Your argument, Sir, proceeds upon this supposition, that notwithstanding the great body of the Jewish church had become corrupt, there was nevertheless a minor part so considerable as to be called *the church*, and with this body, which still remaining a visible church, Christ and

* Eph. iii. 6.

† But the Apostle tells us, that the preaching of the cross to the Jews was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. How believing Gentiles should be united to such a body, is not easy to see.

his Apostles united. I presume, Sir, you will not dispute the fairness of this statement. It only remains then, for you to shew from the faithful records of the Evangelists, this body of believers, which existed and acted as a church, and with which you and your brethren tell us the new converts, made during the personal ministry of Christ, united. Do this, and our objection will be completely silenced. If it be a fact so notorious as you pretend, that there was such a visible body, why is it not discernible? Do, Sir, be so good as to point us to the chapter and verse where we can find the account, and examine it for ourselves. If the disciples and followers of Christ did unite with such a body of pre-Christians, as you tell us they did, we should be singularly obliged if you would show us from the sacred history, the *place* where, the *time* when, and the *manner* of their thus uniting. It cannot be admitted as an answer, merely for you to tell us, That the *covenant* and *foundation* of the church have in all ages been the same; or that the believing Gentiles were grafted into the *same olive*, from which the unbelieving Jews had been broken off. We have a right to expect something more explicit, before we yield the point.

I proceed, Sir, to notice the very serious charge you have brought against me respecting the Jewish church. That your readers might be duly prepared to judge of the evidence, you state the case by saying as follows: "You appear to take a peculiar satisfaction in degrading the ancient covenant and church of God." I should feel the most extreme regret, Sir, if I were sensible that a single expression had dropped from my pen, which by a fair construction might be considered as "degrading" to the ancient covenant and church of God. Nothing was further from my heart; nor can I believe that the candid public will judge, that I have degraded that church, merely because I have given a delineation of its faults and imperfections, as recorded in the scriptures.

In order to support the above charge, you present your readers with a number of quotations from my book; the most of them, however, so interpolated and altered as to convey a meaning different from what I intended. These

quotations are thus introduced: "You think proper to give your readers to understand, that the covenant" (meaning I suppose the Abrahamic) "did not contain the promise of the Spirit, but 'was *only* outward in the flesh' (notwithstanding the Apostle's declaration, that *circumcision was of the heart.*)" That the reader may judge of the fairness of your reasoning, I must ask his indulgence to place before him the passage entire, as it stands in my book. After quoting at large Jer. xxxi. 31—34. I observed, 'This new covenant was established upon *better promises* than those contained in the covenant of circumcision. God did not engage in that, the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, to *put his law in their inward parts.* That covenant was outward *in the flesh*, this is inward, the *law written upon the heart.* In this new covenant, the very *least knows* the Lord. In that, many who were the *greatest* in office and power knew not the Lord.' In the sentence you have pretended to quote from me, you have taken the liberty to add a word, which very materially alters the sense. I said, 'that covenant was outward in the flesh.' You quote me as saying, it "was *only* outward in the flesh." In my statement I had reference to the declaration of God himself. Gen. xvii. 13; *And my covenant* SHALL BE IN YOUR FLESH, *for an everlasting covenant.*

But what proof have you exhibited, Sir, that in this statement I have "degraded the ancient covenant and church of God?" Why undoubtedly the most clear and unequivocal; i. e. "the Apostle's declaration, that *circumcision was of the heart.*" To give the Apostle's words a bearing upon the argument, they must mean, That God engaged that all who had the sign of circumcision in their flesh, already had, or should have their hearts circumcised by the inward operations of his Spirit. For in the new covenant it is expressly said, ALL *shall know me from the least of them, unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.** Did you intend, Sir, to have it understood, that the apostle meant to say, that *circumcision was* generally and universally *of the heart?* If so, I think you

* Mr. Scott's note on this passage, which I have given in another part of this work, is full to my point.

have grossly misrepresented the Apostle. If this were not your meaning, it is nothing to the point.

Again, you charge me with saying, that "there is no evidence that the men of Abraham's house were penitents (notwithstanding the testimony of God that they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.") Here, Sir, I am charged with opposing directly the testimony of God himself. But is it a fair statement? Is it in fact true? The case as stated by me stood in the following light: After assigning my reasons for not supposing Ishmael a penitent at the time he was circumcised, I added; 'Nor is there any more evidence that the men of Abraham's house were penitents, than that Ishmael was.' In order to prove this statement false, and consequently "degrading to the ancient covenant and church of God," you have cited a part of what was said of Abraham and his household at another time and upon another occasion. When Sodom was doomed to destruction, *The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? for I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.** This, Sir, if you are correct, we are to take as the "testimony of God," that all the men of Abraham's house were true penitents at the time when circumcision was instituted? But will it not equally prove, that all Abraham's children and all the men of his house at every other period of time, were as really true penitents, as those who composed his household at the above period? I should suppose this is rather more than you would wish to prove; but if it does not prove this, it proves nothing to your purpose.

These instances are sufficient to show the inconclusiveness of your arguments in support of the charge that I had "degraded the ancient covenant and church of God." Your other arguments under this head, are all

* Gen. xviii. 17. 19.

equally irrelevant, and were it necessary, could be as easily proved incorrect; but I will not trespass on the patience of my reader to do it.

In concluding your argument, you thus observe: "These things, Sir, and numerous others of a similar complexion, you have thought proper to represent in *general terms*; as if such was the character of the ancient church *generally*." My observations, Sir, generally applied to the state of that church at the commencement of the gospel dispensation. But has not Mr. Edwards, who possesses the fullest share of your patronage, spoken as *generally*? and in language equally degrading? Speaking of them collectively he says, "As to their character, it is certain, that, a *few* only excepted, they were upon the whole the *deadly enemies of Christ, and his doctrine*." Did not the Apostle Peter speak in the same "*general terms*," when he said, *Therefore, let* ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL *know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ?** Yet after all this, Sir, I am held up to public view as an offender for saying, that the leaders of the Jewish church were the "despisers, persecutors, and murderers of Christ and his followers." If the leaders of this church, comprising the principal part of their priesthood and public instructors, were not of this character, I freely confess I cannot understand the New Testament. Had you duly considered these things, Sir, I conceive you would not so "often have been lost in amazement" when hearing them from *our* "quarter," as you term it, nor would you have looked upon them as "reproaches against the ancient covenant and church of God."

On the whole, Sir, whatever light you may have offered to others, you have failed of producing conviction in my mind, of the conclusiveness of your reasoning, or the incorrectness of my own. To the Father of lights, who alone can show us where the error lies, and who by the irradiating influences of his Spirit can lead us understandingly into the truth, let us offer our fervent supplications.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

* Acts ii. 36.

LETTER XV.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

IN my Appendix, several arguments were produced to show the impropriety of inferring baptism from circumcision. To these in your Letter of this number you have attempted an answer, which I propose now briefly to examine.

My first argument rested upon this ground, that both circumcision and baptism, were *positive* institutions. I also took it for granted, that all theological writers considered positive institutions to depend entirely, for their authority, upon the will and declaration of the instituter, either expressed, or clearly implied in the institution. This being admitted, it necessarily follows, that no inference can be made from what is fit and proper under one institution, to what is fit and proper under another. Hence, if circumcision were a positive institution, as it most certainly was, whatever was enjoined by it was fit and proper. If baptism be also a positive institution, it determines for itself whatever is fit and proper. It is as independent of circumcision as that was of baptism; and both are as independent, as though the other had never existed. Hence there can be no propriety in reasoning from the *subjects*, *qualifications*, or *requirements* of one to the other.

The above is the precise light in which I understood Dr. Emmons to argue when he said, "If believers are now to baptize their children (as" saith he, "they undoubtedly are) it is not because they were once obliged to circumcise them." But they are to "learn it from the dispensation itself, which enjoins *all the peculiar duties* which belong to it." Yet, Sir, you have the assurance to tell the public, that this quotation "is entirely irrelevant." It must be evident to yourself, and to every other person, who reads the tract referred to, that Dr. Emmons's argument runs directly counter to your's. He plainly denied the propriety of inferring one religious rite from another. Whilst, on the contrary, you argue the right

of infants to baptism, not from the "*institution itself*," but from the *sameness* of the church, and from the *similarity* in the "nature and design" of the two institutions. If Dr. Emmons has never attempted to defend infant baptism on ground entirely different from the above, then I have not brought the slightest charge of "inconsistency" against him. If he has, whose fault is it?

2. I next objected, That 'the institution of circumcision was expressly limited to males.' "This, Sir," say you, "we acknowledge:——But we are clearly taught by the Apostle, that under the present dispensation, this distinction no longer obtains; for now, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is* NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE." To adopt your own language, Sir, "I am often lost in astonishment," to see how you handle the word of God, in order to effect your escape, when cornered by the reasoning of your opponent. Had you given the sense of the text, as stated by the Apostle, it would have entirely defeated your argument. The Apostle does not say, that all who are under the present *dispensation*, (which is the principal change you allow to have taken place) are without distinction *One*; but, referring exclusively to believers, says, YE *are all one in Christ Jesus.* Nor are we told in the sacred word, that this distinction is done away any where, but among *believers in Christ.* Permit me then, Sir, to ask, do you seriously believe, that female infants are believers in Christ? If so, to make your system consistent, you must also admit the Arminian sentiment of falling from grace. Unless you admit this, your quotation proves nothing to your point. I repeat the question, Do you seriously believe that the Apostle meant to include infants, and particularly female infants, when he said, *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ: for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither* MALE NOR FEMALE; *for ye are all* ONE *in Christ Jesus?* Now, Sir, if you do not believe this, and I hardly think you do, then I ask, whether you have not awfully perverted the word of God, for the mere purpose of relieving yourself from the pressure of my argument.

3. My third argument was predicated on the different *prerequisites* required by the two institutions. A fact so demonstrably clear, that I did not expect it would be disputed; but since you have denied the correctness of my statement, it may be proper to spend a few moments in reviewing it. I said, 'the law of circumcision required no previous profession of faith and repentance, neither in adults nor infants, as a qualification for that institution; but the gospel positively requires such a profession in order to baptism, without even an exception in favour of infants.' "This, Sir," (you are pleased to say) "is begging the very question in dispute. Neither part of your proposition is either admitted on our side, or proved on yours." How far I proved the point of real difference, the public, Sir, will judge. Less was said on the subject, as I considered it a self-evident truth, and supposed it would appear as such to every person conversant with the Bible. But if the institution of circumcision, as you argue, did require "an explicit and sincere profession of religion" as a qualification for admission to it, then my argument is inconclusive; for this is all that is required in order to baptism. But how *infants of eight days old*, which were almost exclusively the subjects of this rite, could make "an explicit and sincere profession of religion," must be referred to Mr. Worcester to explain; for I have no conception of it. If, to avoid this difficulty, you should reply, that you only insisted that "an explicit and sincere profession of religion was required in order to complete membership" in the church, but not as a qualification for circumcision; without charging you with having reasoned sophistically, I would ask, what is this to the point? My argument is thus stated: 'The law of circumcision required no previous profession of faith and repentance, neither in adults nor infants.' You reply, "In direct opposition to what you here assert, I have proved at large, that an *explicit and sincere profession of religion* in order to *complete membership* in the church was required under the ancient dispensation, as well as under the present." In order to give your argument the least bearing upon the subject, you must allow, that the qualifications for circumcision, and

for "complete membership" are precisely the same. But to admit this, will involve you in a still greater difficulty; for you cannot suppose that we have forgotten, that you have strenuously contended, that 'to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised,' were not sufficient qualifications for *complete membership* in the Abrahamic church. (See Lett. xii.)

As a further confirmation of the point, "in your favourite style," you ask; "Are you willing, Sir, to have it understood, that you are so *little read* on the subject, as not to know, that when proselytes would join the ancient church, an *explicit profession* of religion was required of them previous to their circumcision?" I must freely own, Sir, that I am so "little read on the subject," as never to have seen any thing like proof of this "explicit profession." In exposing our ignorance to wise men, we expect to gain the advantage of their instructions, as a compensation for the sacrifice. You are so *well read*, Sir, on the subject, that I must beg it as a favour from you, to inform me in what part of the Bible the proof of this *explicit profession* made by the proselytes, is to be found. If it be there, I have somehow overlooked it. I have indeed read, with some degree of attention, the following account given by Moses, Exodus xii. 48, 49. "*When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.*" Here, Sir, we have the terms on which a stranger might be admitted to communion in the Jewish church clearly stated; but where do you see that "explicit and sincere profession" which you tell us of? I have endeavoured to examine every other place relating to the subject, which seemed to afford any prospect of evidence; but I find nothing which warrants such a conclusion.

I do not pretend, Sir, to have read very extensively on the subject of Jewish proselyte baptism. Nor am I wholly ignorant of what *Maimonides*, Rab. *Manachim*,

Dr. *Wall*, and several others have written on the subject: but from the fastidious manner in which you implicitly charge me with the want of information on the subject, I should hardly suppose that you depended on such authorities for your proof. If, however, you have any better, respect for your own character, and for the cause of Pædobaptism, I should suppose, would induce you to present it to the public. Till then, in all probability, we must rest in our present ignorance.

My *fourth* argument, to prove that circumcision did not require the same qualifications as baptism, next passes under your review. This was stated as follows: 'A male slave, bought with money, of any age above eight days, whether a believer or an infidel, whether an idolator or an atheist, had the same right to circumcision as the infant seed of his master.' "This, Sir," (you reply) "in the terms in which you have stated, is not admitted as correct; and proof of it you have not been pleased to offer." I suppose, Sir, you mean to be understood, that your *not admitting it*, is sufficient proof of its incorrectness. However, if proof is demanded in support of the above argument, I shall only present the reader with that part of the institution on which it was predicated. "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, *he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money*, MUST NEEDS BE CIRCUMCISED."* It will now be referred to you, Sir, to shew the difference, in point of claim, betwixt the slave bought with money, and the home-born child, in relation to the rite of circumcision.

In connexion with the foregoing, you have brought forward the following question proposed by me, viz. 'We ask, and we hope we shall have a candid answer, When and where has the right of servants, as distinguished from that of children, been repealed?' To which you reply, "Such an answer, Sir, can be given, and I am ready to give it. 'The right of servants as distinguished from that of children,' *is repealed*, or abdec-

* Gen. xvii. 12, 13.

laration of the repeal is made, in the same *twenty-eighth verse of the third chapter of Galatians*, which I have just before had occasion to quote. For you will be pleased to observe, that though it is expressly declared, that, under the present dispensation, *there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female*, NEITHER FREE NOR BOND: it is not added, *there is neither* PARENT NOR CHILD!" This, Sir, is your answer, just as you have placed it before me.

The promptness with which you have answered the above question demands my cheerful acknowledgment; but by your permission, I must request a moment to examine the correctness of it. However I may differ from you in opinion, I am constrained to allow, that you have an undeniable claim to the honour of giving a new sense to the passage quoted. I have heretofore thought, with commentators in general, that the Apostle meant to say, that, in point of *acceptance* with Christ, and privileges enjoyed in him, all distinction of *nation, condition*, or *sex*, was done away. But, Sir, according to your argument, this is not an abrogation of distinctions, but a *repeal* of privileges. But does it not in your sense prove rather too much? If this be indeed "a declaration of a repeal of the right of servants," is it not also a repeal of the right of masters? If of *bond-men*, is it not of *free* also, yea, of Jew and Greek, of male and female? In short, is it not a "repeal of the right" of all, excepting that of *parents* and *children*? And in order to secure their right, will you not need the help of *Ovid*, to metamorphose them somehow, so that they shall be *neither male nor female*, as these are expressly mentioned in the repealing clause? On the whole, the passage you have quoted will forever remain hostile to your scheme, until you can make it appear, that children with their parents are IN CHRIST: *for*, saith the Apostle, *ye are all* ONE IN CHRIST JESUS: that is, all believers, whether Jews or Greeks, bond or free, male or female; and if parents and children are not the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, they are no more *one* under the gospel dispention, than they were under the Jewish. Thus, Sir, your answer when fairly examined has not the smallest bearing upon the question, nor is it at all appli-

cable to it. Confident of having silenced the foregoing objections, you hasten to your conclusion. This is presented in a style, which I am sorry to say, is too characteristic of the general spirit of your writings. "Had this, Sir," say you, "been duly considered, you and *your brother Merrill* would probably have spared yourselves much *fervid declamation*," &c. "Your brother Merrill!" I hope, Sir, I may never blush in being reproached for holding in fellowship a Christian brother, so justly esteemed, merely because his enemies treat him with contempt, and endeavour to silence his arguments by sinking his reputation.

Your remarks on my 5th and 6th arguments are not deemed of sufficient importance, to require particular notice. I will just observe, however, that after having noticed Mr. Merrill, as above mentioned, you pay yourself a very handsome compliment, by asking, "And do you not think, Sir, that it requires no very small 'stock' of *patience* and *moderation*, to read and attempt to answer a book, in which, *instead of argument*, one meets at every turn, with the outbreakings of a spirit so unbecoming the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus?" But the reader will ask, what has put Mr. Worcester's "*patience* and *moderation*" to such a severe test? The offending sentence shall be stated, and the public are at liberty to censure the author with as much severity as they may think he deserves.

After showing the almost total unlikeness of the two institutions, it was added: 'It certainly requires a large stock of mystical, jesuitical ingenuity, to make an inference plausible, when the *nature*, *act*, and *design* are so different.'* This is the sentence which calls for the exercise of so much patience and moderation. I will only say, whatever in it may be considered as improperly severe, I most heartily retract.

Your last paragraph deserves a moment's attention "Had you proved, Sir," say you, "that baptism is es-

* This expression was used with particular reference to the facility with which that order of men trace out similarities, and make inferences. I have somewhere seen it asserted, that Bellarmine said that he could prove the supremacy of the Pope, from the first chapter of Genesis.

sentialy different in its nature and design from circumcision, you would have proved something.—Until this be proved, a hundred 'dissimilarities' of a merely circumstantial nature, will avail you nothing." If an hundred *dissimilarities* will not prove a thing to be different, it must be considered as a very hard task to prove the difference between one thing and another. If a person should insist that Melchizedec and Abraham were one, how would you prove, Sir, that they were not? Would you undertake to prove, that the former differed in *nature* and *genus* from the latter? or, would you urge the "circumstantial dissimilarities" by which the Scriptures distinguish their characters? I am apt to think you would conclude, that the latter only, would furnish sufficient proof.

In closing my remarks on this letter, Sir, I beg leave to suggest the following queries for your consideration.

1. If the "nature and design" of baptism be the same as circumcision, what possible reason can be assigned, why it should not be uniformly applied to the same subjects? Circumcision was limited to males only: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, *both men and women*."

2. If the "nature and design" of both be the same, why should those be baptized who had been circumcised?

It is abundantly evident, that the Apostles as uniformly baptized Jewish converts, without the least regard to their having been circumcised, as they did those who from among the Gentiles turned to God.

3. If the "nature and design" of baptism be the same as circumcision, must it not bind the subjects of it to the same duties, and expose them to the same penalties? "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing: for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, he is a debtor to do the whole law; Christ is become of none effect unto you."* This, by your argument, must be the case with every baptized infant.

* Gal. v. 2, 3, 4.

Baptism is "*not the putting away the filth of the flesh; but the answer of a good conscience toward God.*"* "*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*"† Could this be said of those who were circumcised? I refer the above to your serious consideration, and am,

Dear Sir,

Respectfully yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I NOW proceed to the consideration of your arguments in your XVIth Letter, in which you attempt to prove, that baptism holds the same rank in the church now, as circumcision did formerly.

1. "Baptism is now," say you, "as circumcision anciently was, an instituted pre-requisite to a regular standing in the visible church."

After such a statement as this, we should hope never more to be blamed for our particular communion, for this is precisely the ground on which we defend it. So far, therefore, as it respects baptism, the sentiment is correct, according to our views of the subject: and hence the only question between us should be, What is baptism?

That circumcision was the door of admission for male proselytes into the Jewish church, is abundantly evident; but it is not so clear with respect to the seed of Abraham. I rather think they were born members, and the males were circumcised in compliance with a special law to that purpose: or else, how should it be said, that the *uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people.* If cutting off, meant exclusion from the church, they must have been considered as members previously to their circumcision. Would there be any propriety in threatening to *cut off* a person from a body to which he did not belong? Besides, circumcision, during the long

* 1 Pet. iii. 21. † Gal. iii. 27.

march of the Israelites through the wilderness, was suspended for the space of forty years, without, as I recollect, in the least affecting their visible standing in that church.

2. "Baptism, under the present dispensation, is of the same significance with circumcision under the ancient." This is your statement, Sir; but how do you prove it? Why "as a *sign* circumcision signified the renovation of the heart, or regeneration." This loose explanation I have often met with: but did it signify that the heart *had been* regenerated; or, that it needed *to be* regenerated? If it signified the former, it could not possibly be a true *sign*. I conclude, however, from the Scriptures which you have brought to establish your sentiment, that you meant the latter. "CIRCUMCISE, *therefore, the foreskin of your of your* HEART, said Moses, *and be no more stiff-necked.*" This clearly supposes that the heart had not been circumcised, although they had long before been the subjects of that circumcision *which is outward in the flesh.* "And again," you add, "*The Lord thy God will* CIRCUMCISE THINE HEART, *and the* HEART OF THY SEED, *to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*" "This injunction," you inform us, "is equivalent with that in Ezekiel to *make them new hearts.*" Here, Sir, you furnish us with the most incontestable evidence, that their hearts had never been renewed, notwithstanding their circumcision, and visible standing in the church. And is baptism significant of the same? that is, that the heart needs renewing? It may be, as administered by Pædobaptists; but did it signify the same as administered by the Apostles? You certainly must know it did not. You are seriously called upon, Sir, to produce an instance in the New Testament, where the members of the Christian church are ever addsessed in language similar to the preceding.* These are never called upon "to *circumcise*, nor to *baptize their hearts*;" (the latter, by the way, would be equally as proper, if they are both of the same import,) but are uniformly addressed as persons whose

* The instance of Simon the sorcerer would in vain be urged in the present case; as it was on the supposition that his heart had been renewed, that he was admitted to baptism.

hearts had been renewed. I should suppose that this single circumstance would be sufficient to convince an unprejudiced mind, that your reasoning must be entirely fallacious and vain.

In proof of your mistaken theory, that circumcision and baptism signify regeneration, you quote the following address of Christ to Nicodemus: "*Except a man be* BORN OF WATER *and of* THE SPIRIT, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" "In this memorable passage," you observe, that "*being born of water*, or baptized with water, and *being born of the Spirit*, or being baptized with the Spirit, are presented together, the one as the *sign*, the other as the thing *signified.*" And is it not surprising, Sir, that you should so deliberately, and from a pertinacity of sentiment, *put asunder what* you tell us *God hath joined together?* Or are we to believe, that you seriously think, that the infants, which you profess to baptize with water, are also *born of the Spirit?* Both Scripture and reason forbid the thought.

As a further illustration, you add, "*For by* ONE SPIRIT, says the Apostle, *are we all* BAPTIZED *into one body.*" I am unable to discern what distinct idea you meant to convey from this passage, as you have quoted it. Did you suppose that the *obedient believer* and the *unknowing infant* of eight days old were actuated by *one* and the same Spirit? That they are partakers of that *oneness* which unites the saints? It cannot be admitted. That believers of any number should be actuated by the same Spirit, is not to be doubted. But it is not only said, that by *one Spirit, are we all baptized, but into* ONE BODY. What body is this, Sir? Is it the church? Is it Christ's mystical body? Have you not virtually denied that infants belong to this body, in any proper sense?* They are indeed by your statement somehow related to it, but not strictly of it. I hardly think, Sir, the Apostle had any reference to infants when he penned the above passage; if he had, he undoubtedly considered them as "complete members!" —baptized by *one Spirit into one body.* As a further illustration, you add, "*By his mercy he saved us, by the* WASH-

*This I understand to be Mr. W's. meaning, Lett. XII. p. 61.

ING OF REGENERATION, *and* RENEWING *of the* HOLY GHOST." This indeed looks like God's method of saving sinners; but what has baptism, as administered to infants, to do with the RENEWING OF THE HOLY GHOST?

3. "Baptism," say you, "under the present dispensation, is *a seal* of the same thing, of which circumcision was *a seal* under the ancient." And add "We have the express declaration of the Apostle, that circumcision was *a seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith*; of that *faith which Abraham had before he was circumcised*, as well as afterward, and of which every true believer is the subject." We are willing, Sir, to allow all that the Apostle asserts, viz. That Abraham *received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which* HE HAD *yet being uncircumcised.* But we can by no means admit your deductions, that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith to any others, much less to all others, who received it. Many who had the righteousness of faith, never had this seal; and thousands, who had it, we have every reason to believe, never had the righteousness of faith!

Was not Melchizedec, Sir, interested in the righteousness of faith? I think you will not dispute it: and yet, although cotemporary with Abraham, his faith never had this *seal!* Was not Abraham's nephew, Lot, whom an inspired Apostle styles *that righteous man*, interested in the rigteousness of faith? and yet, Sir, it is plain that circumcision was not a seal of it to him. On the other hand, were not thousands circumcised, who were never the subjects of the righteousness of faith? Can you seriously think that St. Paul considered it as *a seal* of the righteousness of faith to himself? If so, is it not surprising, that he should set so little by it as to place it among the things which he counted *loss* and *dung*, in order that he might win Christ, and be partaker of *his* righteousness.* What! be willing to renounce, and throw away the *seal*, and count it as *dung*, in order that he might obtain the thing *signified!* This, Sir, is but a small part of the inconsistency, which follows upon your mode of reasoning.

* Phil. iii. 8.

You proceed to say, 4. "That baptism has come in the place of circumcision, we are decisively taught, by the Apostle, in Col. ii. 10—13."

This passage, Sir, as it appears to me, is so far from affording any "*decisive*" evidence in favour of your theory, that, if rightly understood, it will go to prove exactly the contrary. The principal object which the Apostle had in view in this chapter, was to guard the minds of the believing Colossians against the *deceitful* maxims, and *vain traditions* of men; *after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* The words taken in their connexion may be paraphrased as follows: "Take heed, my brethren, *lest any should beguile you with enticing words. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord* into your hearts, and submitted to his doctrine, see that you walk as you have been taught by him. *Beware* of any admixture of heathen *philosophy*, or Jewish *tradition* with the pure doctrine of Christ: for *ye are complete in him*, without being circumcised according to the law of Moses, inasmuch as ye have experienced the *circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.* This you have witnessed to the world, by being *buried with him in baptism*, wherein also you professed to be *risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" This, Sir, looks to me to be the meaning of the Apostle; but in a passage where much of the language is so evidently figurative, I dare not be very positive.

You inform us, Sir, that in the above passage, "we are *decisively* taught by the Apostle, that baptism has come in the room of circumcision." Yet after giving Dr. Emmons's comment, you add; "The Apostle, it is true, is here speaking of SPIRITUAL *circumcision and of spiritual baptism:*" then certainly not to the point in dispute. Pray, Sir, do look a moment at your remarks. *Buried with him* in "spiritual baptism!"—And this too, "come in the place" of "spiritual circumcision"! And yet, after all, these very Colossians, according to the Apostle, had both! What "decisive" evidence, that baptism, as an institution of Christ, has come in the room of circumcision!

From arguments thus "decisive," you proceed to the following conclusion: "The four arguments now offered, Sir, are neither *mystical* nor *jesuitical*, but plain and scriptural, and in my view amply sufficient to establish the point now in proof." Whether your arguments are either *mystical* or *jesuitical*, I shall not pretend to say; but I shall feel myself fully justified in doubting your theory, until you offer something more to the point.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XVII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR xviith Letter comes in course to be reviewed. But as this, Sir, is principally taken up in recapitulating your preceding arguments and conclusions, I shall only notice a few things, and these very briefly.

From what you have advanced in the preceding Letters, and in your two Discourses, you say, "the general conclusion from the whole, may be expressed in two particulars."

1. "Children now hold the same covenant relation to the church which they anciently held. The church is the same, the covenant the same, the promise the same. Therefore,"

2. "The infant seed of the church are now as proper subjects of the *seal* of the covenant in the form of baptism, as anciently they were for the same *seal* in the form of circumcision. Their covenant relation to the church is the same, and the nature and import of the seal are the same."

After a few remarks, you proceed, with an air of triumph, to say; "In the present case, the burden of proof certainly devolves upon you. Yes, Sir; I feel warranted, upon fair and honourable ground, to *demand of you*

categorical proof, when and where this right of infants was vacated."

I hope, Sir, you will not insist upon our "proving, when and where" the right of *female* infants has been vacated; as, by the covenant to which circumcision was annexed, and which you tell us the church is now under, they never had any right to any external seal whatsoever. And if "children now hold the *same* covenant relation to the church which they anciently held," as stated in your first conclusion, then it is plain that female infants can have no more right to baptism now, than they anciently had to circumcision.

Nor will your second conclusion help the matter in the least. For this only supposes that "the infant seed of the church are now *as* proper subjects for the *seal* of the covenant, in the form of baptism, as they were for the same *seal* in the form of circumcision." Were all this admitted, Sir, it would only prove, that male children are proper subjects of baptism: for these only were such under the former dispensation. But to relieve yourself from this embarrassment, you tell us in the next page, that you "have shewn, that the ancient distinction between *male* and *female* is now abolished; and therefore as it is acknowledged on all hands, that the membership, in some sense, of male infants in the one church of God, was divinely instituted, so females are now to be admitted upon the same footing." There is nothing *mystical*, I suppose, in this argument.

But, Sir, how have you proved, that "the ancient distinction between male and female infants is abolished?" You have not proved it at all, unless producing a passage of scripture which has no reference to the subject, proves it. The passage on which your whole proof rests, goes no further than to declare, that *Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female*, who are the *children of God* BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, *are all* ONE IN HIM.* I now ask, Sir, what has this to do with infants, either male or female, or even adults, if they are not believers in Jesus Christ? The answer must be, Nothing at all. It leaves them where it found them. It hence follows, Sir, that the '*all-in-*

* Gal. iii. 26—28

portant' point, the very 'sine qua non' to support your scheme, is still wanting.

There are other important objections which lie against your conclusions. "The infant seed of the church," say you, "are now as proper subjects for the *seal* of the covenant in the form of baptism, as they anciently were for the same *seal* in the form of circumcision?"

Should we admit, Sir, what you contend for, that circumcision was a *seal* of the covenant, a seal of the righteousness of faith, or of any thing else to which you are pleased to apply it, it will by no means follow that baptism is a seal of the same. The scriptures no where teach us, that baptism is the seal of any covenant: nor is it ever mentioned under the notion of a seal, to my recollection. It is called, a *putting on of Christ*; a being *buried with Christ*; *the answer of a good conscience towards God*: but no intimation of its being a seal. The children of God are indeed sealed, but in a manner very different from this. The Apostle to the believing Ephesians says, *in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were* SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE.* Not with baptism, but with the Holy Spirit: not in infancy, or before they believed, but afterwards. The same persons are also charged *not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.*† We must therefore have proof, Sir, that baptism is, by the New Testament writers, considered as a *seal of something*, before we can admit your conclusion.

We further object to your statement, that "the infant seed of the church are now as proper subjects—of baptism as they anciently were of—circumcision." If by "*proper*," you have respect to moral fitness, it is denied. This is begging the very question in dispute. It is impossible to suppose that any moral qualifications were required in order to circumcision, when male infants of eight days old, and servants bought with money, were expressly declared to be "proper" subjects. I should suppose it equally impossible, for a person to read the account of the various baptisms recorded in the New-Testament, and not feel a conviction, that previous moral

* Eph. i. 13. † Eph. iv. 30.

qualifications were *always* required. I am aware that you may try to evade this, as Mr. Edwards has done, by saying, that this only respected adults. But we shall still insist that the rule is general, and that it makes no exception in favour of infants.

That male infants were proper subjects of circumcision, could be known only from the institution itself, and not inferred from the nature and fitness of things. None were deemed proper subjects of that institution, but such as were expressly named in it. The same is true of baptism. The institution acknowledges none as proper subjects, but such as profess faith in Jesus Christ.

But I must attend a moment to your demand for "categorical proof, when and where this right of infants was vacated." Although I am far from conceding, that the burden of proof lies on me, yet being desirous of removing every reasonable objection, I shall place such evidence before you as I deem sufficient to prove the point.

In the fifteenth chapter of Acts we are informed, that *certain men which came down from Judea to Antioch, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* This excited an unpleasant dispute in this infant church, which could not be settled by Paul and Barnabas. It was finally referred to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem. And what, Sir, was their decision? That baptism had taken the place of circumcision? Not a word of this kind of reasoning dropped from the lips of either an Apostle or Elder. But they wrote Letters after this manner. "The Apostles and Elders and Brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain that went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment; it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul—who shall also tell you the same things by mouth: for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats

offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." Candour will here decide, whether the right of infants of Gentile believers to circumcision, is not clearly "vacated." Whether the right of infants has been revived in any other form, does not lie with me to prove, but you. You only demanded that I should show where that right had been "vacated." It is most certainly here abolished as it respects the church of the Gentiles, and not a word said about baptism as being substituted in its room.

The above transaction was also recognized by the Apostles several years afterwards, at the time when Paul was made a prisoner at Jerusalem. "Thou seest, brother," said they, "how many thousands of the Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews that are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, that *they ought not to circumcise their children*; neither to walk after the customs. What is it, therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.—As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded, that *they observe no such thing*, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, &c.* the same as mentioned in the xvth chapter.

Two things are plain from the above passage. 1. That the Jewish believers still continued to circumcise their male children, and therefore not at all likely that they baptized them in the room of circumcision. Had they not been still in the practice of circumcision, they certainly would not have blamed the Apostle for neglecting it. 2. Notwithstanding their zeal for the continuance of circumcision among such Jews as embraced Christianity and had been baptized, they totally disapproved of its being urged upon the Gentile church.

Had the Apostle, Sir, understood the subject precisely in the same light as you do, it would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to have satisfied his brethren entirely, unless they were as obstinate as the

* Acts xxi. 21—25.

Baptists. Could he, consistently with truth, have availed himself of the second part of your conclusion, it would have done the work at once. What could they have said, had he boldly insisted with you, that "the infant seed of the church are now as proper subjects for the *seal* of the covenant, in the form of baptism, as anciently they were for the same *seal* in the form of circumcision?" They must have either denied his statement, or been entirely silenced by it.

And is it not unaccountable, that this happy thought should have wholly escaped the Apostle? Yes, Sir, perfectly unaccountable, that neither at *Antioch*, nor before the *council*, nor at this time when the subject was again revived, a solution so perfectly natural and easy, as that proposed by you, should not in the whole course of the debate have occurred to his recollection? I am persuaded, Sir, had you been on the spot with your present views, they would have felt the force of your eloquence, if you had not convinced them.

But, Sir, I must bestow a moment's attention on your concluding paragraph, and will then relieve your patience. Here, in a manner characteristic of your general treatment of the arguments of your opponents, you are pleased to say, "your objections and implications, so profusely scattered up and down in your book, *respecting the want of faith or other qualifications in infants*, though calculated to operate upon such as are *more influenced by declamation* than by argument, are as totally irrelevant, as they are highly improper." Why are they irrelevant? Or why are they improper, Sir? Because "they might," say you, "every one of them, be urged with equal propriety against infants being admitted to the seal of the covenant under the ancient dispensation, as under the present."

The falsity of this statement will be seen by two plain remarks. 1. Infants, by the express letter of the "ancient dispensation," were admitted to what you call the "seal of the covenant." They are not expressly mentioned in the New Testament institution, nor is there any positive proof that ever one was admitted to the ordinance of baptism. This, Sir, exceedingly weakens

the strength of your position. 2. We deny, and call on you to prove, that a previous profession of faith and repentance was ever required in order to *circumcision* under the "ancient dispensation?" or, that any person was ever admitted to *baptism* under the gospel dispensation without such profession. Until you can prove these points, (and it is believed they cannot be proved) I ask how you can, with the feelings of an upright man, declare all my objections respecting the "want of faith and other qualifications in infants," to be mere empty "declamation," and "totally irrelevant?" Yea, more, Sir, you strongly insinuate, that by these objections, I "call in question" the infinite wisdom of God, and "reproach his sacred institutions." "God who is infinitely wise," you observe, "certainly saw fit to institute, that the seal of his covenant should be applied to the infant seed of the church." That the infinitely wise God saw fit to institute circumcision, and to declare infants of eight days old, proper subjects of that rite, we readily admit; and whenever it can be made to appear, that the same provision has been made in the New Testament for infants, in relation to baptism, the dispute will be at an end. I am,

Dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just finished perusing your XVIIIth Letter, and shall take the liberty to submit a few remarks upon it to your consideration.

You inform us, that "the promise respecting the children of the church was in a sense *conditional*, and none were to be considered as the children of the promise, but those with respect *to whom* the conditions of the

promise were fulfilled." From this it appears, that the conditions of the promise, as thus stated, did not lie with the children to perform, but with their parents to perform for them. For "had not Abraham," say you, "walked before God according to the covenant requirement, and faithfully commanded his children and his household after him, God would not have stood engaged by the covenant so to impart his grace to them," &c. According to this, we must suppose, that if Ishmael, or any of the patriarch's other children were not equally interested with Isaac in all the blessing of the covenant, it must be owing to some criminal neglect in Abraham, in not fulfilling the condition of the promise "with respect to them." This, I confess, Sir, is a dreadful conclusion; but it appears to flow spontaneously from your premises. For, in your mode of discriminating the children of the promise, it does not appear, that the conditions of the covenant are to be fulfilled *by them*, but by their parents "with respect to them."*

The foregoing sentiment appears so opposite to the general tenor of the Scriptures, that I am astonished to find a man, supposed to be evangelical in sentiment, attempting to vindicate it. It is equally surprising that you should infer your doctrine of "conditionality" from God's saying to Abraham, "*Walk before me, and be thou perfect.*" Is it not much more natural to consider this as a *command*, than as a condition of the promise? Had it been designed as a condition, we should suppose it would have been expressed in the subjunctive mood: "IF THOU WILT *walk before me*," &c. No more, it is conceived, was here required of Abraham, than what the divine law requires of every child of Adam.

I should suppose, Sir, it would be extremely difficult to reconcile your notion, of parents fulfilling the conditions of the covenant "with respect to their children," so as to secure the blessings of the promise to them, with numerous explicit declarations of Scripture. Such in particular, as the xviiith chapter of Ezekiel. According to the reasonings of this prophet, however righteous

* Lett. p. 87.

the parent might be, if the son did not walk in his steps, his father's piety was of no avail to him. Nor does your plan agree any better with the promises of the gospel, given us in Christ. These are not yea and nay: *for all the promises of God in him are yea, and Amen, to the glory of God by us.*

That we might fully understand you on "this subject of *conditionality*," you are so obliging as to illustrate your meaning by the following statement, viz. "The condition of a promise," say you, "I consider in the light of means to an end. If I promise a man a sum of money, on condition of his doing a piece of service, his doing that service is a mean of his obtaining that money." This is undoubtedly correct, as it respects promises of a commercial nature between man and man. But does this, Sir, convey your ideas of the promises of grace? The promises given to believers in Christ Jesus our Lord? If so, I shall cease to wonder, that you should proclaim with an air of triumph, that you were "not such a predestinarian," as to believe that Christ would have come into the world at the appointed time, if circumcision had not been instituted, or Abraham had failed in any point of his obedience. But I confess, Sir, your doctrine of conditionality appears to me to differ entirely from the doctrine of grace, as stated in the Bible.

"If I promise a man," say you, "a sum of money on condition of his doing a piece of service." Then you are certainly bound by every principle of moral justice to pay him, in case he faithfully fulfils the stipulated service. But how your fulfilling this engagement should be considered as an act of *grace*, surpasses my comprehension. If the promise respecting "the children of the church," be conditional in the sense you have now stated, I should suppose it would make that covenant, a covenant of works, to all intents. Can any thing more perfectly characterize a covenant of works, than your illustration of this? Or could you give a more correct view of the covenant of works (as you have called it) made with Adam, than to say, "that certain conditions were to be fulfilled by him, which would entitle him to the promised blessings of that covenant?"

But, Sir, how will your conditional plan agree with the Apostle's distinction between works and grace, as stated in Rom. xi. 6? *And if by grace*, says he, *then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.* This, Sir, is a clear distinction between blessings conferred by grace, and such as are a reward of works. It is hence plain from the Apostle's reasoning, that even the salvation of the seed of Abraham is not by any special act of faith, or any works or conditions fulfilled by him, or by their immediate parents; but by the sovereign mercy of God, *a remnant according to the election of grace* are saved.

After this full disclosure of your views of the "conditionality" of the promise made to Abraham respecting his seed, I should suppose you would never show the least reluctance in giving your hand to an Arminian brother: for you know, Sir, conditional salvation is a distinguishing feature in their system.

Your other illustrations are of the same import. "If I promise a child," say you, "a favour on condition of his good conduct in any specified instance, his conduct in that instance, is a *mean* of his obtaining the promised good." Very true, Sir; but I can see nothing in this which looks like the grace of the gospel. Would not this child feel his obligation of gratitude to you much weakened from the consideration of his having performed the task assigned him? Would he not thank himself, at least in part, for having fulfilled the condition on which the bestowment of your favour was suspended? Would he not be likely to say, Papa, was not I a good boy? Would it not also afford him occasion for boasting, when comparing "his good conduct" with others, who had come short of the blessing? Might he not with propriety say to his brother, "had you only conducted as w
as I have done, you might have received the sa
vour?" These, I freely confess, are not my vie
my brother, *I have not so learned Christ.* I ha
lieved, that *in keeping God's commands, th*
ward; but not for it. Nor have I ever
evangelic obedience was produced
N 2

tion of favour or reward; but have ever supposed, that that only was acceptable to God, which proceeded from a grateful sense of favour already received.

"Not by the terrors of a slave,
Do they perform his will;
But with the noblest powers they have
His sweet commands fulfil."

Of the above illustration, you make the following application: "So if God promise mankind the pardon of sin, on condition of their believing in Christ, their believing in Christ is a mean of their obtaining pardon." I believe, Sir, it would be as difficult to find such a conditional promise in the gospel, as it would be to find the sepulchre of Moses.

I have not a wish to digress from the present subject, for the sake of engaging in another; but as I pursue your system, my suspicions increase, that we differ in more points than one. As a matter of experience, I freely acknowledge, I have never once thought of ascribing the pardon of my sins to my believing, nor to any thing else done by me; but have ascribed it alone to the free, unmerited favour of God. The sentiment has been strengthened in my mind by such passages as the following: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour; for to *give* repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and *that* not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are *his workmanship*, CREATED *in Christ Jesus unto good works*. For "it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."*

I proceed next, Sir, to consider what you call "a very material mistatement" made by me, in charging you with making an unscriptural application of the promise in your text, 'to believers and unbelievers, or to *believing parents* and their *unbelieving children*.' To which you reply, "Now, Sir, I must take leave to say, that I can scarcely conceive of a more palpable mistatement than this, which you have thought proper to exhibit. *No where in my Discourses, is there any thing to be found, like what you represent*

* Acts v. 31, Eph. ii. 8, 9. Phil. ii. 13.

as being my APPLICATION *of the* COVENANT *to believers and unbelievers.*"* I have strangely mistaken your reasoning, if this be the case. I beg you, however, my dear Sir, to believe me when I declare, that if I have misrepresented your sentiments, it has not been intentional; but because I misapprehended your meaning. I have now endeavoured carefully to examine your statement in the Letter before me, and also those parts of your Discourses to which you refer; and after all, I must own I am surprised at the charge. I will state my difficulty, for your consideration.

1. You very justly acknowledge, that I had 'shewed at large, that believers *only* are considered as partaking in the blessings of the promise.' This argument I adduced from the first member of your text: i. e. *ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed.* Being Christ's I considered as limiting the application of the promise. After stating what I called a "concession" to the sentiment in your Discourses, you proceed to show, that the sentence to which I referred was not an inadvertent slip, but that you had repeatedly asserted the same thing, in different parts of your Discourses.† By this it would appear, as though we were perfectly agreed in the proper application of the promise in your text; namely, that none are to be considered as heirs but *true believers.* I am obliged to say, that you have stated things very differently in other parts of your book. Hence, if I have been in an error, I was led into it by the general tenor of your reasonings.

In the first place, I understood you to argue generally that the promise in your text was the same which was made to Abraham and his seed in the covenant of circumcision. This you have endeavoured uniformly to support, in discussing the two first propositions in your Discourses. I was further led to this conclusion, by a still more explicit remark under your 3d proposition. Here, when speaking of the establishment of the covenant, and of its renewal at different times, you observe, "For as in the first instance, the covenant was made with Abraham and his *seed*; so in the second, it was made

* Lett. p. 90. † Lett. p. 91.

with the *nation* of Israel, *including their little ones*; and in the last, with the *whole house* of Israel." You add, "And it is well understood, that the term *house*, when used in this sense, always comprises both *parents* and *children*."* Here, Sir, you inform us, that "Abraham and his seed," "the nation of Israel, including their little ones," "the whole house of Israel, including *parents* and *children*," mean the same thing. And yet, you say, "No where in my Discourses, is any thing to be found, like what you represent as being my application of the covenant, to believers and unbelievers!" If this be not to apply it to believers and unbelievers, in the fullest and most explicit sense, I know not what words could convey such an idea. Was there ever a period, when it might in truth be said, the whole *nation* of Israel, including their "little ones," were all believers? Do you seriously believe it yourself? You have certainly, in the above instances, applied the covenant to the whole nation of Israel, and you must either say, that you verily believe them all to have been *believers*, or else acknowledge, that you have 'applied the promise to believers and unbelievers, or to believing parents and unbelieving children.' If your application of the covenant to the "*whole house of Israel*, including parents and children," be not to apply it 'to believers and unbelievers,' I freely confess, I shall despair of proving my point. Should you, however, with a view to avoid this conclusion, attempt to prove that "the whole nation of Israel, including their little ones," were all true believers, I should not think it worth my while to dispute it.

2. The subject appears further embarrassed, from what you have said with regard to the *seal* of the covenant. I undertood the Apostle (in Rom. iv. 11.) to say no more, than that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of *the faith which* HE HAD;" and not that it was a seal of the righteousness of faith generally, to all, to whom it was applied. But in contradistinction to this, you tell us, "We have the express declaration of the Apostle, that circumcision was *a seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of faith*, of that faith which

* Disc. p. 20.

Abraham had before he was circumcised as well as afterwards, and of which every true believer is the subject. You further add, "there is but one righteousness of faith, namely, the righteousness of Christ, by which believers in all ages have been and will be justified. Of this righteousness circumcision was the seal."* If you have any fair meaning consistent with the tenor of your argument, it must be, that it was a seal to all who received it. Yea, you go further and say, "that baptism, under the present dispensation, is of the same significance with circumcision under the ancient." If you are correct, Sir, baptism is now a seal of the *righteousness of faith*, that is, of the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, (as you explain it) to every infant to whom it is applied, as really as circumcision was to Abraham! Do you not then apply this seal both to 'believers and unbelievers?' Yea, do you not apply it chiefly to the latter? Or will you, in order to relieve your system from this difficulty, undertake to say, that the *seal* constituted no part of the covenant? Surely you will not. And do you not then 'apply it to believing parents and to their unbelieving children?'

Permit me, dear Sir, to ask once more; Do you not consider it as one very important blessing of the covenant, to have the seal (as you term it) applied to your children? Yea, more, do you not, in praying for your children, pray for them as in covenant with God? If so, is not this applying the blessings of the covenant to '*believers* and *unbelievers*?'

3. You have selected the following remark from my Strictures, as containing something peculiarly "injurious" to your sentiments; to wit: 'If ye parents, one or both of you, be Christ's, then are ye, and all your children, Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' But is there nothing in your Discourses, Sir, which would lead a candid reader to such an inference as this? It was certainly from what you had there asserted, that I was led to the remark. The sentence to which I refer, stands as follows; "To be *children of the promise*, they must be children of faith; children, of whom there is, on the part of the parent or parents, the faith of Abraham

* Lett. p. 80, 82.

in the covenant of God." Would not every unprejudiced reader put this plain construction on the passage; that if the parents, or even one of them, had the faith of Abraham (and every believer has the same kind of faith, or they are not Abraham's children) then their children were children of the promise? It must here be observed, that, upon your hypothesis, the faith that constitutes the child an heir of promise, is the faith of the parent, and not the faith of the child itself. Does this differ materially, Sir, from my statement, that "if ye parents, one or both of you, are Christ's, then are ye and all your children Abraham's seed?" &c. It will not I think be denied, that the scriptures clearly support the conclusion, that every true believer has the faith of Abraham; that is, the same for kind, although not in the same pre-eminent degree. Then it follows, as a consequence of your argument, that the children of every believer are "children of the promise." Do you not then, Sir, apply the "covenant," the "promise," and the "seal" of the covenant to unbelievers?

4. Permit me, dear Sir, to notice one thing more. You most certainly know that the Baptists have uniformly insisted, that the *promise* mentioned by the Apostle Peter, Acts ii. 39. is limited by the last clause. *For the* PROMISE, saith he, *is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off;* EVEN AS MANY AS THE LORD OUR GOD SHALL CALL. In opposition to this, you also know, that the Pædobaptists have constantly insisted, that the *promise* in this text embraces the *children* of believers, whether they are *called* by grace or not. On this ground they have constantly argued their right to baptism. That you hold the same sentiment, I think may be fairly inferred, from the manner of your quoting the passage, and the remarks you have made upon it. After reciting the text at large, you add, by way of comment, "In this passage,—there is a most evident allusion to the covenant made with Abraham. And then add, *the promise is to you and to your children;* for the Lord said unto Abraham, I will be a God unto *thee*, and to thy *seed* after thee." Did you not mean by this language, Sir, to have your hearers believe, that the promise of God to Abra-

ham and his seed, embraced believers and their seed while in a state of unrenewed nature, or antecedent to their becoming believers themselves? If so, will you still say there is nothing to be found in your Discourses like an 'application of the covenant to believers and unbelievers?'

Indeed, Sir, have you not done more? Have you not quoted the Apostle Peter as applying this covenant to a collection of Jews, which were manifestly unbelievers? "*Ye are the children of the prophets and of the* COVENANT, (said he) *which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy* SEED *shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*"* It seems to be peculiarly unfortunate for you, that the words quoted by the Apostle on this occasion, are not found in the covenant of circumcision, but refer to Gen. xii. 3. as in the margin. Nor does he seem to have had any idea of your peculiar sentiment, that in order to be children of the covenant "they must be children of faith; children, of whom there is, on the part of the parent or parents, the faith of Abraham in the covenant of God." No; he calls them "*the children of the prophets and of the covenant*," merely as the descendants from Abraham, without probably knowing the state of their ancestors for many generations. I might easily multiply proofs from other parts of your Discourses, particularly from your 4th head of improvement, in which you "infer the duty of believing parents to give up their children to God in baptism," &c. This you argue from God's promise to be a God to Abraham and his seed, and to believers and their seed.†

Enough, I trust, has been said, to convince a candid public, that you have repeatedly applied the *covenant*, the *promise*, and the *seal* of the covenant to the *infant-seed* of believers: And these I shall take the liberty to consider as unbelievers, until proof is made out to the contrary. To reconcile this with what you have elsewhere said; to wit, "that this covenant is never *established* with any but true believers, or the subjects of true religion," is not a concern of mine.

However, Sir, if it be your wish now, to have it understood, that *believers only* are interested in the blessings

* Lett. p. 33. † Disc. p. 53.

promised to the seed of Abraham, and will set down for nought, all that you have said to the contrary in the foregoing passages, (and many others to the same import,) in which you have applied the covenant, promise, &c. to the unbelieving children of Jews and Gentiles; I will cheerfully consent that all which I have said in the "twenty pages of my book" to disprove it, shall also go for nought. But if, on the contrary, I have now proved, by quotations and fair deductions from your Discourses, that you have "applied the covenant to *believers* and *unbelievers*," then my "Stricture will not be considered as totally irrelevant."*

I am unwilling, Sir, to complain of a want of perspicuity in your manner of reasoning. But I must be permitted to say, that it is not the easiest thing in the world to understand a writer who tells us, that "in God's sovereign purpose in Christ Jesus before the world was, *the eternal salvation of his elect was determined*; the way and the means of their salvation was also *determined*:"† and in the next page to tell us, "that the promise respecting the children of the church was in a sense *conditional*." Again, "that to be children of the promise," one or both of their "parents must have the faith of Abraham in the covenant of God."‡ And yet that it is not indeed supposed to be certain, that if they be unbelieving and disobedient, their children will be finally lost: for God may, as often in his sovereign mercy he does, go out of the limits of the church, and bestow his grace on those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers from the covenants of promise*."‖

I cheerfully acknowledge one point of conviction which I have received from your remarks in this Letter, that instead of quoting a single passage from your Discourses as a *concession*, I might have said that you generally conceded it. But this will not be considered as a concession on my part, that you have not, as stated above, applied the covenant, &c. to unbelievers as well as believers.

Suffer me, Sir, to make a remark or two on the closing part of your Letter now before me, and I will relieve your patience for the present.

* Lett. p. 92. † ibid. 86. ‡ Disc. p. 36. ‖ ibid. p. 52.

"I hold indeed," say you, "that all true believers are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So far, Sir, I agree with you; for so far, the scriptures support the sentiment. But you proceed to say, "That as God promised to be a God to Abraham and *his seed*, so he promises to be a God to all true believers and *their seed*." Here, Sir, I am obliged to pause, for the want of evidence. And after all the light which I can gain upon the subject, the fact appears to my mind to be directly opposite to what you have stated. Whether the *seed* of believers stand in the same relation to *them*, as they themselves do to Abraham, is the very *pith* of the controversy between us; and may be considered as the very source and parent of infant baptism. But as this subject forms a prominent part of your next Letter, I shall reserve my principal observations until I reply to that; and, in the mean time, would only beg leave to inquire, Whether the children of believers, as soon as they are born into the world, are not to be considered as their *seed?* and whether, as such, you do not apply to them what you call the *seal of the covenant?* If so, I would ask, Whether this be not, in the most direct terms, "applying the covenant to unbelievers?" Is not this alone, Sir, sufficient to destroy the whole force of your charge against me, of having in a very "injurious manner misrepresented your sentiments?" When, on the one hand, Sir, you declare that you hold no such sentiment; but have uniformly insisted, that, in order "to entitle Abraham to the blessings of the covenant, he must walk before God, and be perfect; must have *true faith*, and be *sincerely obedient*;" and not only 'that this was necessary, as it respected himself personally, but equally necessary, as it respected his children;' and that "the whole which you have said, in reference to the *application of the covenant*, is in perfect agreement with this;" I confess I am ready to yield the point, that I have misapprehended you, and of course may have made wrong deductions from your arguments. But when, Sir, I look on the other hand, and, in reviewing your arguments, hear you testify, that, as in the first instance, the covenant was *established* with Abraham and his seed, so in the second,

it was "made with the NATION of Israel, including their *little ones*," and again renewed "with the HOUSE of Israel, comprising both *parents* and *children*;"* and further, that God now "promises to be a God" to the seed of Gentile "believers" in the same sense as he engaged to be a God to the *spiritual seed* of Abraham,—I again hesitate. If there be nothing contradictory in the two positions, I must be allowed to say, there appears, at least to me, to be a great deal of '*ingenious obscurity*.'

I am, Dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XIX.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I NOW enter upon a review of your XIXth Letter. This you commence by attempting to prove the statement made in the close of your last; viz. "That as God promised to be a God to Abraham and *his seed*, so he promised to be a God to all true believers and *their seed*." This is a point of vast importance in the present controversy. Could you be convinced, that the *seed* of believers were not *conditionally*, or somehow in covenant with their believing parents, I am persuaded you would feel your confidence in infant baptism greatly weakened. But, Sir, if the difficulties you have met with, in attempting to prove it, have had no effect upon your mind, it is doubtful whether any thing that I can offer will convince you.

You will recollect, Sir, that you have already decided, that the promise to Abraham, to be a God to him and to his seed, included only his spiritual seed; and that Abraham's spiritual seed, included not only the believing Jews, but all true believers among the Gentiles. The question then, Sir, is fairly before us: Do the sacred

* Disc. p. 20.

scriptures consider *other believers* as standing in the same relation to a *spiritual seed*, as they do Abraham? Is each believer constituted a father of a spiritual race? If not, your argument falls to the ground. If the scriptures support the sentiment for which you contend, then it will follow, of course, that every believer may be considered as the father, at least, of all succeeding believers! and, *vice versa*, all succeeding believers as their *spiritual seed!* Does not this conclusion, monstrous as it may appear, absolutely follow from your premises? Or, on the other hand, if God has promised to be a God to believers and *their seed*, including the whole of their natural offspring, then he has promised more to them than by your concession he did to Abraham. And yet, after all, if this be not your meaning, I freely confess, I know not what you do mean; nor is it possible, I conceive, to know. Your language is general; "believers and their seed;" "the children of the church," &c. Are not all the children of believers their seed? Do you not also mean by "the children of the church," all the children belonging to church members? Or, have they any children that are not their seed? If they have, do be so good, Sir, as to tell us what you mean by the seed of believers, and by the children of the church.

It must, I think, be apparent to every candid reader, that you have utterly failed of proving your point, as stated in the beginning of this Letter. But this proof, such as it is, shall be considered presently. You will give me leave, Sir, previously just to observe, that you admit, that in a limited sense my statement is true, 'that by the special appointment of God, Abraham was placed in a situation different from all other believers; and in this peculiar situation, many things were promised to his seed which are not promised to other believers:' it is beyond the shadow of a doubt, in my mind, that the point in question is one of them. I am the more fully established in the sentiment, from a careful examination of the evidence which you have collected in order to prove the contrary. A few of your most direct proofs will now be briefly noticed.

You begin with Gen. xviii. 19. "*I know Abraham, that he will* COMMAND *his children and his household after him; and they* SHALL *keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*" After viewing this passage, emphasized to the best of your skill, to make it appear favourable to your sentiment, is it possible for a candid mind to see the smallest degree of evidence, that God has promised to be a God to the *seed* of Gentile believers in the same sense that he is a God to the spiritual seed of Abraham? I certainly should suppose not. Indeed, Sir, I believe you thought so too; for you add, "It will not, I trust, be deemed, that in this declaration, the Lord had reference directly to the promise made to Abraham, *to be a God to him, and to his seed after him.*"* Admitting this, and it is difficult to see for what purpose you brought the text forward.

"But in perfect coincidence with this," say you, "is the general direction and promise: *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart* [from it] *therefrom.*" We here indeed recognize one of Solomon's judicious aphorisms. But is there any thing in it like the promise in question? Does this afford any evidence that God has promised to be a God to the *seed* of Gentile believers? That it is a great and solemn duty for parents to bring up their children in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*, will be readily admitted. Also, the force of education on the manners and morals of mankind in advanced life, will not be denied. But how this proves the point in question, we have not skill enough to discern.

Your next proof, you also tell us, is "in perfect agreement with this," and we conceive, is as little to the point. The passage is Psa. lxxviii. 5—7. which the reader may examine at his leisure. The words taken in their connexion, teach us this plain truth, that it is the duty of every generation to make known to their children, who are to succeed them, the mighty works of God, in order that they may be induced to place their hope and trust in him alone. But we see nothing in

* Lett. p. 93.

this passage that can be fairly urged in favour of the promise under consideration.

Your third article of proof, with the comment you have put upon it, is very extraordinary, and demands particular consideration.

"One principal purpose," you observe, "for which John was sent in the spirit and power of Elijah, was *to turn the heart of the fathers unto the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers*; and in this way, according to the tenor of the everlasting covenant, *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord: lest he come and smite the earth with a curse.*" You have indeed, Sir, quoted this passage, interlarded with a few expressions, so as to accommodate it to your purpose. But when I consider the object for which you introduced it, I am totally at a loss to conjecture what idea you had of it, or even whether you had any distinct idea at all. Permit me, Sir, to ask in your own language, "Did you read" and consider the true import of the text? "or did you only glance your eye over it, and happening to light" upon the words *fathers* and *children*, at once press it into your service? The solemn manner in which you urge the consideration of this text, is equally surprising. "Please to observe, Sir, (say you) so important was the *covenant provision with respect to* CHILDREN, that owing to a neglect and contempt of it, the *earth was in danger of being* SMITTEN WITH A CURSE!" But pray, Sir, in what sense were the hearts of the *fathers* turned to their *children*, so as to prevent this awful calamity? Was it in their "fulfilling the conditions of the promise with respect to them?"* If so, how are we to understand the other part of the text? For *the hearts of the* CHILDREN *were turned to the* FATHERS, in the same sense as the fathers were turned to them. Did the preaching of the Baptist turn the hearts of their "*little ones*" to their fathers, as you explain the provisions of the covenant in another place?† If this were not the case, your argument "vanishes into thin air." On the whole, Sir, all your *beaten oil* affords us no light upon the passage.

* Lett. p. 87. † Disc. p. 20.

I think, in the present case we may, without danger, admit the following corrections of the Hebrew copy, as stated by *Kimchi* and *Ben Melech*; who suppose, as observed by a learned Hebrician, that על is put for עם in each clause. According to these Jewish *Rabbins*, the passage should read thus, "To turn the hearts of the fathers *with* the children, and the hearts of the children *with* the fathers," and thus, by producing true repentance, "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."* This sense is most clearly justified by the facts recorded by the Evangelists. The effects of John's preaching were visible in the repentance produced, as we have reason to suppose, among people of every age and condition. What a blessed sight, to see fathers and children turning to the Lord! If they had been unhappily divided into different sects and opinions, by embracing the Messiah, whose approach John announced, they would undoubtedly be *turned*, or reconciled to each other.

If we are willing to receive the light as reflected from the sacred pages, we shall perceive with clearness a glorious reformation produced by the preaching of the Baptist; in which, multitudes of all ages, forsaking the corrupted system of Judaism, embraced the report of the approaching Messiah. But what evidence arises from all this, to prove that God has engaged to be a God to the "seed of believers" as he promised to be a God to Abraham's spiritual seed? I confess, I can see none at all. Your other quotations from the scriptures are equally irrelevant.

Although, in my judgment, you have entirely failed in proving your point; yet I am willing to allow, that you

* Should the opinion of the above named RABBINS be disputed, you will recollect, Sir, (for I presume you understand Hebrew,) that על is sometimes rendered *with*; as in Gen. xxxii. 11. אם על בנים, The mother *with* the children. Again, in Exod. xxxv. 22. על might, with great propriety, be rendered *with*. "The men *with* the women:" Or, if used as a conjunction, as in our translation, "the men *and* the women," it conveys the same sense. But in either of these passages, it would make nonsense to translate על, *to* or *unto*, as it is rendered in the passage to which you refer. To turn the hearts of the fathers *with* the children, (or fathers *and* children,) to the Lord, is a work worthy of a teacher sent from God: but to turn them *to* each other, conveys no very interesting idea to the mind.

have done all that could be done. Hence I do not blame you for not proving it, but for insisting upon what cannot be proved.

On supposition that the point is not as you have stated, you ask, "Why are children, in covenant promises made to the church, so constantly connected with their parents?" I should suppose, Sir, that a satisfactory answer might be given, without, in the least, resorting to your theory. Such declarations were undoubtedly designed to teach us, that religion was not to expire with that generation to whom the promises were first made; but that, in every age, God would have a seed to serve him.

You proceed, in the next place, to charge me with making a distinction between the 'natural descendants of Abraham, and Gentile believers.' To which you add, "After conceding 'in a general way,' as you seem to have been constrained to do, by an unpropitious quotation from the excellent Dr. Fuller, that '*spiritual blessings were promised*' in the covenant '*to the* NATURAL *seed of Abraham*;" you then represent me as saying, 'All this may be readily *admitted* with respect to Abraham and his descendants, but it does not prove that the same things are engaged or fulfilled to Gentile believers.' I assure you, Sir, I consider it as the most "unpropitious" circumstance attending my quotation from Dr. Fuller, its having fallen into your hands to be so cruelly mangled; for you have by no means given your readers a fair view either of his statement or mine.

This fact, I think, will fully appear to any candid person who will be at the pains to examine two pages of my book.* In these it will be seen, that I made a quotation from Dr. Fuller's expository notes on Gen. xvii. 7. And, in approbation of his remarks, I added, 'All this may be readily admitted, with respect to Abraham and his descendants,' &c. In order to show how Dr. Fuller meant to be understood, I subjoined his own note, without adding a single remark upon it, either approving or disapproving. In the passage as quoted by me, the Doctor, in stating what God did for the posterity of Abraham, says, "he not only gave them the land of Ca-

* P. 270, 271.

naan for a possession, but himself to be *their God, King* or *temporal Governor.*" "Nor was this all: it was among them that he set up his spiritual kingdom, giving them his lively oracles, sending to them his prophets, and establishing among them his holy worship," &c. In his note, which I subjoined, he thus remarks, "As an Antipædobaptist, I see no necessity for denying that spiritual blessings were promised *in this general way*, to the natural seed of Abraham." Without, Sir, letting your readers know what he meant by this "general way," you present me as acknowledging, through Dr. Fuller, that "*spiritual blessings were promised*" in the covenant, (not in this general way) *to the* NATURAL *seed of Abraham.*" Yea, you present me as further saying, 'All this may be readily admitted with respect to Abraham and his descendants,' &c. Whereas, the quotations you have thought proper to place before the public were never introduced by me as illustration of my subject, but as Dr. Fuller's illustration of his own. Nor, Sir, are your conclusions any more correct than the dissected premises from which they are drawn.

Limiting my remark to what I had quoted, I said, 'All this may be readily admitted.' To which you reply, "Really, Sir, this is 'admitting' a great deal." I perceive, Sir, you think so, and appear to be quite elated with it. But what is the conclusion which my *admission* is thought to furnish, so interesting to your plan? Why, that the *ancient covenant* "contained greater and richer promises than are made to the church under the present dispensation." But how does this appear? Why, "according to your 'admission,' say you, in his *ancient covenant*, God did engage 'in a general way' to *believers*, to be a God, not only to them, but also to their seed." No, Sir, you are not correct. No such thing is admitted: Dr. Fuller, in his *note* to which your quotation refers, says, "Spiritual blessings were promised, *in this general way*, to the natural seed of *Abraham.*" But neither he, nor I have said any thing of promises to the *seed* of other "believers." But, Sir, you proceed to force another conclusion from my *admission*, which is equally erroneous; namely, that God not only engaged to save believers, "but also to be-

stow spiritual blessings upon their offspring!" This, by the words which you have quoted, you pretend to infer from the above mentioned note; which, however, asserts no such thing, but exactly the contrary. In order to guard against an inference of the kind which you have made, the Doctor adds: "But I perceive not how it follows from hence, that God has promised to take a people from among the natural descendants of believers, in distinction from others." He further adds, "What was promised to Abraham was neither promised nor fulfilled to every good man."* To borrow your language once more, "I am constrained, Sir, to ask, Did you read Dr. Fuller's note? Or did you glance your eye over it, and happening to light on the expressions you have quoted, immediately conclude, you had found something exceedingly different from what I had attempted to prove?"

You close your remarks on the consequences of my '*admission*,' as follows: "After this, Sir, you will no more, I hope, think it strange that *we*, of the Pædobaptist faith, are zealous in our adherence to God's gracious covenant with Abraham and his seed."† Considering you as the defenders of *infant baptism*, I do not wonder at your adherence to that covenant: but when I consider you as enlightened Christians, who profess to revere the authority of *that* PROPHET that was to succeed Moses, I can never cease to wonder, that you should so pertinaciously adhere to those *parts* of that covenant which have had their accomplishment, and were considered in the apostolic age as having *waxen old and ready to vanish away*.

I agree with you, Sir, that "there are many promises made to the people of God, besides the simple promise, *He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved*." But this does not affect the argument. The question is, Whether *the faith* to which you attached the *promise* in your text was a similar act of the mind to that to which the Apostle attached it? If I can understand you both, they are specifically distinct. You make it to consist in the exercise of the believer's faith in God's covenant concerning his children; and the Apostle states it to be simply that faith in the Lord Jesus, by which the soul is saved

* Appendix, p. 270. † Lett. p. 95.

It is not the question, Whether one believer may not perceive and embrace some particular promises which are not embraced by others; but whether the faith mentioned by the Apostle in your context is not that which is common to all believers.

I proceed next to notice what I considered in my Strictures, as the consequence of admitting your views of the "*promise.*" I stated the objection as follows: 'According to Mr. Worcester, if we rightly understand him, the salvation of the children of believers depends principally upon the faith and fidelity of their parents.' To this objection you are pleased to reply, "It is not possible, Sir, that you should have understood me to hold that any, either parents or children, are ever saved otherwise than by the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus the Saviour."* I exceedingly regret, Sir, that you should suffer yourself to be hurried into a conclusion so opposite to that Christian candour, which you have so often expressed in the course of your Letters. You undoubtedly meant to have it understood, that I had misrepresented your real views; and consequently, if it were "not possible" that I should have misunderstood you, then the error (if there was any) must have been *wilful and designed!*

If you have not, after all, Sir, asserted the very sentiment which I have charged you with, I must acknowledge I still have the infelicity of not being able to comprehend your meaning. In what other light can I possibly view the following? "The promise, then, to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him, was of this *purport*, that on CONDITION *of faith and fidelity on Abraham's part, in respect to his children*, THEY *should become* SUBJECTS OF GRACE, and heirs of the blessings of the covenant."—"The same (promise)" you add, "is now made to all true *believers*, his adopted children of every nation."† This sentiment runs through your writings. The public will therefore judge, whether the statement in my Strictures is not a fair deduction from it.

But, Sir, in the closing part of the next paragraph in the Letter before me, you seem to abandon this ground,

* Lett. p. 98. † Disc. p. 38.

and, instead of considering the "faith and fidelity of parents," as a *condition* of the salvation of their children, you place it in the list of *means*.—"Among these instituted means, *the faith and fidelity of parents* holds a most important place."* Have you not here, Sir, in order to appear consistent with what you had just said respecting "sovereign grace," given up your favourite doctrine of *conditions*, after having "cherished it with so much parental fondness?"

Means, and conditions, you know, Sir, are distinct things. That there is a connexion between the *means* used and the *end* to be obtained, will be admitted: but it is not an infallible connexion. The ploughing and sowing of the husbandman, are the ordinary means of his obtaining a crop. But although he should prepare his ground in the best manner, and sow his seed in due season, he has no assurance of a crop. A blast, a mildew, or even insects may entirely defeat his hopes. But had it pleased God to have made the ploughing and sowing of the husbandman the condition of his receiving a crop; we should certainly suppose if he did plough and sow, according to that condition, he would infallibly receive a crop. Nor is there any sovereignty, I conceive, (I speak it with reverence,) in God's fulfilling the *conditions* which he may have been pleased to engage by covenant to his creatures, any more than there is in their fulfilling the duties required on their part. But this is not the case with *means*, even such as are of God's own appointment: these it is our bounden duty to use; but after all, it depends on the *sovereign* pleasure of God, whether they shall succeed.

Your returning the questions which I proposed, concerning any special act of "faith or fidelity" on the part of Abraham towards Isaac, in distinction from Ishmael; or of Isaac towards Jacob, in distinction from Esau; only shows, that you found some difficulty in answering them.

In noticing my remarks upon the promise to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3. *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*; you inform your readers, that I have "these remarkable words:" 'This promise did not depend at all

* Lett. p. 98.

upon the obedience of Abraham, or any other creature. It was in no sense conditional. The divine veracity was pledged for its fulfilment; and whether circumcision had been instituted or not, God would, in the fulness of time, have sent his Son into the world, and would have blessed the nations in him.' I should really suppose, Sir, that your objections, when you duly reflect upon them, must appear even to yourself more "remarkable" than my statement. For if the promise was conditional in the sense which you have represented it, it could not have been certain until all the conditions on which it depended were fulfilled. I am willing, Sir, to confess, that it is my belief, that before the foundation of the world, God determined in the fulness of time, (that is, at the very time the event took place) to send his Son to be the Saviour of lost men: nor did I ever know until instructed by you, that it depended on so many *conditional* circumstances. Alas! how fluctuating must have been the hopes of fallen man for four thousand years! After all, I can no more conceive that the fulfilment of this promise depended on the incidents you have mentioned, than that the Saviour's dying for sinners conditionally depended on the instigations of Satan, the treachery of Judas, or the cruelty of the Jews. Could you not, Sir, furnish an argument equally plausible, that God's promise to give the posterity of Abraham the land of Canaan at the expiration of four hundred years, was not *absolute*; but depended *conditionally* on the sins of the Amorites; for they could not be driven out and dispossessed *until their iniquity was full.*

You sum up your objections to the absoluteness of that great promise respecting the Saviour, in the following exulting language: "Now, Sir, I confess to you freely, that I am neither an *Antinomian* nor a *Predestinarian* of this sort." Really, Sir, if you do not believe that the divine promise in question, which involved the whole plan of redemption, was rendered *absolute* and *immutable*, by the divine VERACITY ALONE, without the least regard to contingent circumstances, I know not, nor am I concerned to know, what "*sort* of a Predestinarian" you are. However, Sir, this I as freely confess to

you, that I am just such a "Predestinarian" as to believe, that when God makes an *absolute* promise, without annexing conditions, (and there were none in this) that he will infallibly make it good. And I am strongly inclined to think, in the present case, that Abraham believed God, that he would fulfil his promise, without for a moment recurring to the long train of conditional circumstances, which you make necessary to its accomplishment; or, without knowing that it was ever to be connected with a covenant, to be ratified by the sign of circumcision.

I pass over several things in this Letter, which I deem incorrect, but not of sufficient importance to require particular animadversion; and hasten to spend a few moments on your last paragraph, in which, by a single stroke, you have attempted to silence all the arguments in favour of infant communion.

"Infants," you observe, "may be the subjects of *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*, signified by baptism; but they cannot *discern the Lord's body*, and *commemorate his death* in the holy supper." This is the first instance that I recollect ever to have met with, of an assertion of this kind. The thought, I confess, appears somewhat new and singular. It has been generally acknowledged, that persons, while in a state of *unrenewed nature*, could not discern *spiritual objects*; but I never knew before, that such as were "the subjects of the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and *sprinkling of the blood of Christ*," were still without spiritual discernment! Pray, Sir, how do you know, that those infants who are the subjects of the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost, cannot discern the Lord's body? Are they any more capable of giving evidence of the former, than of the latter? Could you, Sir, be satisfied with the experience of a person who should pretend to be *renewed by the Holy Ghost*, but who should declare that he had no *discernment of the Lord's body*, as having been offered upon the tree of the cross? If this spiritual discernment be not effected by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, we should be glad to be informed, how it is ever to be effected. Is there any other agent, by whose influence the mind of a sin-

ner is enlightened? Alas! to what subterfuges are you driven, in order to defend your theory!

In support of the above assertion, you have produced no proof, nor offered a single reason; yet you have the modesty to say, that "this single obvious remark I deem a sufficient answer to all which you have said, and to all which the Rev. James Pierce, of Exon, has said on the subject of infant communion at the Lord's table." Whatever the public may judge with respect to the conclusiveness of your answer, I think they must allow, that you have taken a very expeditious mode in relieving yourself from the pressure of your opponents' arguments.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XX.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I NOW embrace a moment's opportunity, to make a few remarks on your XXth Letter; for I consider but a small part of it as having any thing to do with me, or my writings.

Why you should give me such a rough handling for what Mr. Merrill has written, is utterly inconceivable. Particularly as I had rarely mentioned him in the whole of my Appendix; and should probably not have mentioned him at all, but for the sake of correcting a mistake in Dr. Austin's reply to him, in his construction of John, xiii. 10; and even in this instance, I gave notice that 'I had no where in the course of my animadversion attempted to vindicate Mr. Merrill.'

Your treatment of me in this Letter, has too much the appearance of a petulant man, who, when offended with one of his family, or neighbours, will be out of hu-

mour with all the rest. You seem to be so irritated by Mr. Merrill's writings, as to be hardly able to treat him with decency. I am persuaded, Sir, in your moments of calm reflection, you will perceive a contemptuous *hauteur* in your treatment of that Christian brother, totally unbecoming the disciple of the same Master. It would not be difficult for any person of common discernment, to conjecture what was the temper of your mind, when guiding your pen to such expressions as the following: "*Your* brother Merrill."* "You and *your* brother Merrill."† "*Your* friend and brother Mr. Merrill."‡ These, Sir, may serve as a specimen of the complaisant manner in which you introduce Mr. Merrill to public notice; and your whole treatment of him is of the same tenor. I hope, however, Sir, I shall never blush to own a Christian brother, who has held so respectable a standing in your connexion for a number of years, only because he has been compelled, by his Bible and conscience, to become a Baptist. But I will leave this part of the subject for the present, and attend to what more immediately concerns myself.

You introduce this Letter by a paragraph from your Discourses, in which you assert, that you have the "testimony of the earliest of the Christian fathers, that this (viz. infant baptism) was the universal practice of the church in the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles." "In support of this statement," you add, "I subjoined a note, presenting a summary view of the testimony of the primitive fathers, in which it was *clearly shewn*, that during the first century, and several succeeding ages, infant baptism was practised in the church universally." "This point," you continue, "is *so clear* and *so amply* supported, that you have neither ventured to deny, nor attempted to disprove it; but I am sorry to have occasion to say, that imitating too closely a common practice with those who have a *bad cause* to support, what you perceived you *could not answer*, you have attempted to ridicule."‖

It is certainly, Sir, paying yourself a very handsome compliment, to say, that because I did not deem it ne-

* Lett. p. 79. † Ibid. 101. ‡ Ibid. p. 104. ‖ Ibid. p. 102.

cessary to answer what you call the "testimony of the fathers," that therefore it must be unanswerable. But, Sir, with your permission I will now attempt briefly to analyze this "*clear* and *ample*" testimony which you have given us from the fathers, in favour of infant baptism. It must, however, be observed, that you first, implicitly acknowledge, that "there is nothing *directly* on the subject, either for or against infant baptism, in the fragments that have come down to us in the writings of the first century."

Notwithstanding this acknowledgment, you have now "the assurance" to say, that "this point is so clear, and so amply supported," that I "have neither ventured to deny, nor attempted to disprove it." I think I shall run no great hazard in "venturing" to examine it: at least, I am disposed to make the attempt.

The first witness from the early fathers, as they are called, which you have named, is *Clemens Romanus*. The writings attributed to this father, are acknowledged by Dr. Mosheim and others, to be generally spurious; hence no great dependence, we conceive, can be placed upon what may be found "in the fragments which have come down to us."*

With the above you connect *Hermes Pastor*. Here again it is allowed, that the original Greek of Hermes is lost, and nothing remains but a Latin version called *The Shepherd*. The only passage, in the writings of this father, which has come to my knowledge, which has any reference to the subject, is the following: In the description of his Tower, he says, "What are the rest of the stones which fall by the water-side, and could not be rolled into the water? They are such as have heard the word, and were willing to be baptized in the name of the Lord; but afterwards withdraw themselves, and walk according to their own wicked inclinations."† I know not that this can be relied upon; but, if it be true, it is in favour of our sentiments, and not yours.‡

* Mosh. vol. i. p. 107, 108.

† Vid. Smith *vs.* Parsons.

‡ That this father might receive all due honours, the *Roman Martyrology* has made him into two saints! The memorial of *Hermes* being observed May 9th, and of *Pastor* July 26. See Northouck's Biog. Dict.

There is also a passage in the writings attributed to *Barnabas*, another writer of the same century, though not mentioned by you. This, whether considered as genuine or spurious, affords proof in favour of our sentiments. It is as follows: "They are blessed," says Barnabas, "who, fixing their hopes on the *cross*, have gone down into the water. We descend into the water full of sins and defilements, and come up out of it bringing forth fruit, having in our hearts the fear and hope which is in Jesus."*

Now, Sir, admitting that this was not written by Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul; as it was written at that early period, it has the same weight in the argument as though it were genuine; for no other writers can be supposed to have forged a sentiment which would go to condemn their own practice. And as you do not admit that there were any Baptists at that day, we certainly cannot be charged with the forgery.

And what, Sir, is the testimony you have exhibited from the writings of these two fathers? Not a single word! How then, it will be asked, have you supported your argument in "such a clear and ample" manner? Why, truly, you have very gravely told us, that in their writings "passages are extant, which, by *fair implication*, prove the practice of infant baptism in their day."—A very expeditious way of proving a point, to be sure! If Mr. Worcester only says it can be made out by "fair implication," then the point is so "clearly and amply supported," that his opponent has not the temerity either "to deny, or to attempt to disprove it!" I confess, Sir, I feel inclined to smile; and I suppress it only lest you should charge me with having treated your proof from these fathers with "lightness," or with "ridicule:" and, after all, I can hardly help it, when I consider the high ground which you have taken, and the confidence with which you assert the "clear and ample" manner in which you have proved your point.

Although I do not scruple your veracity, yet I think I may, without a breach of charity, question the correctness of your judgment, on a point to be made out by *impli-*

* Vid. Smith vs. Parsons.

cation, and one too in which you are so much concerned.

I would just remind you, Sir, of your charge against the Antipædobaptists, that "they undertake to *assert*, not *prove*," &c. It is charitably hoped, in future, modesty will prevent a repetition of this charge.

Your witnesses of the second century, to which I now proceed, are *Justin Martyr*, and *Irenæus*. These you make responsible for infant baptism in the second century. But what proof have you adduced from them, which "so clearly and amply" supports your argument? Why, after informing us, that the former was born within three or four years of the death of St. John, and that the latter was the disciple of Polycarp, you remark, that these "are *more particular and clear* to the same purpose."

This, Sir, is all that you have let us know with respect to the testimony of these two fathers, on which you have rested the whole evidence of infant baptism during the second century!

In the note before me, you have not favoured us with a single sentence from any of the writers of the two first centuries in favour of infant baptism. How then, it may again be asked, is infant baptism so clearly proved? Precisely in this way: My Rev. opponent says, that "in the fragments that have come down to us" of the writings of Clemens Romanus, and Hermes Pastor, "passages are extant, which, by *fair implication*, prove the practice of infant baptism in their day." And that Justin Martyr and Irenæus "are more particular and clear to the same purpose!"—Will any Antipædobaptist ever after this dare even to "*assert*," that it has not been demonstrated in the most "*clear* and *ample*" manner, that "infant baptism was universally practised in the two first centuries?"

As you have not given us any clue by which to ascertain the particular passages to which you refer in the writings of the two last fathers, we have a right to conjecture that you keep the beaten path. Presuming on this, it may be proper, for a moment, just to notice those passages which have been resorted to by other Pædobaptist writers. The passage from *Justin* is the following:

"Several persons among us, men and women, of sixty and seventy years of age οι εκ παιδων εμαθητευθησαν τω Χριστω, *who from children or youth have been disciples of Christ*, (or still more literally, *have been discipled to Christ*,) remain incorrupt."* This, Sir, I conclude, is the testimony of one of your witnesses, which, you tell us, is "more *particular* and *clear*" than those of the first century.

We will now listen a moment to the testimony of *Irenæus*. It reads thus, "He (Christ) came to save all; all, I say, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, *who by him are regenerated to God*, or *are born again unto God*, infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men."† No Baptist will ever dispute such being proper subjects of baptism.

To rest a cause upon testimony so vague and uncertain; yea, upon testimony which does not so much as mention the subject in dispute, nor necessarily imply it, must show that its advocates are hard pressed indeed. St. Paul, speaking of Timothy, says, *that from a child he had known the holy scriptures*. But, I believe, few ever thought he was born with this knowledge, or that he had it until he was old enough to be taught.

We have now, Sir, seen all the proof you have offered for infant baptism from the writers of the two first centuries: but we must say, we still doubt. And to let you know, that the Baptists are not alone in their doubts respecting this kind of evidence, I will place before you the opinion of two Pædobaptists of no mean fame. The first is *Curcellæus*, a learned divine of Geneva, who succeeded the famous *Episcopius* in the professorship at Amsterdam, in the seventeenth century. This learned writer thus frankly acknowledges: "Pædobaptism was unknown in the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by a few; at length, in the fifth and following ages it begun to obtain in divers places; and therefore this rite is indeed observed by us as an *ancient custom*, but not as an *apostolic tradition*."‡ The other is Bishop *Taylor*, who calls it a "*pretended* apostolical tradition;" but further says, "that the tra-

* Apol 2. p. 62. † Adv. Hæris. l. 3. c. 39.

‡ Institut. Rel. Christ. l. 1. c. 12. in Dr. Gill.

dition cannot be *proved to be apostolical*, we have very good evidence from antiquity."*

Century III. The witnesses, Sir, which you depend upon for the support of infant baptism in this century, are *Tertullian* and *Origen*. The testimony of the former was considered in my Appendix, (p. 184, 185.) It will there be seen that this affords no proof of the point, but much to the contrary: the reader is referred to what is there written. It is believed that Tertullian was the first who ever mentioned the baptism of infants; and in this we perceive no reason for the conclusion, that by "infants" he meant mere *babes*; particularly as he mentions such as were capable of "asking to be baptized." And even the baptism of *these* infants he opposed, as not being, in his judgment, sufficiently enlightened and established in the Christian doctrine.†

Origen is your next witness, and the first whose words you have condescended to give us. You have stated them as follows: "What is the reason that whereas the baptism of the church is given for forgiveness, *infants* also, by the *usage* of the church, are baptized; when, if there was nothing in infants which wanted forgiveness or mercy, baptism would be needless to them." Is this passage, Sir, found in the *Greek* of Origen? or is it in the *Latin* translation of *Ruffinus?* As it is denied by those who are well acquainted with the Greek copies of Origen, which are still extant, that there is any thing in them that can, by fair construction, be rendered favourable to infant baptism, but much to the contrary; I shall, therefore, take it for granted, that your quotation is from the Latin of *Ruffinus*. This version, you know, Sir, has been challenged as a spurious work; or at least, as being so interpolated, as not to be depended upon. And as *Erasmus* observes, "Whoever reads these pieces, it is uncertain whether he reads Origen or Ruffinus."‡

* Liberty of Prophesying, p. 320, 321.

† Tertullian, speaking of the state of religion in the time in which he lived, says, "It is well known that a great variety of superstitious, ridiculous, and foolish rites were brought into the church. The Dissent. Gent's. 3d. Lett. p. 32. in Dr. Gill.

‡ See also Du Pin, Mosheim, and others.

But the quotation, should we admit it to be Origen's, contains much absurdity, and some truth. Who but Origen, or somebody equally as mystical, can see any meaning or use in giving *baptism to infants for the forgiveness of sins?*" Is it to shew that they are forgiven? then it shows what is not true. Or, is it to shew that they need forgiveness? this is known without it, and therefore unnecessary. Or, is it to show, that they shall be forgiven? this is, after all, uncertain. Indeed, the sentence shews nothing so plainly, as the absurd, confused ideas of the author. But, Sir, there is one fact expressed in the sentence, that is worthy of notice. It is not pretended that *infants* were baptized by *divine command*, nor even by *apostolic tradition*; but by "the *usage* of the church." There is no dispute, but that some churches had introduced such a *usage*, at the time when Ruffinus wrote, which was towards the close of the fourth century; and from the freedom which he acknowledged he took with the writings of Origen, there is much reason to suppose he added this sentence. But if it were clear beyond a reasonable doubt, that the sentence in question was written by Origen himself, it affords no proof that infant baptism was practised by the Apostles. All ecclesiastical writers agree, that many *additions* and *corruptions* had crept into the church before the close of the second century.

The next evidence which comes in course in your note, is taken from the result of a council held at Carthage, A. D. 256. As this has been already noticed, (See Append. p. 312.) I shall add only a few remarks in this place.

If infant baptism were instituted by Christ, and practised by the Apostles, and by the Christian church universally, as you affirm, can any man believe, that, after the experience of more than two centuries, it should be a question, *At what age babes might lawfully be baptized?*

If you have not greatly erred, Sir, in your statement, infant baptism had been practised much longer, and much more generally, by all Christian societies at the time of that council, than it has been in this country from the time of the landing of our forefathers at Plym-

outh, to the present day: and yet, it seems, it is not at all surprising to you, that a country Bishop should be at a loss to know at what age infants might lawfully be baptized!

Will any man seriously believe that there has been, or is now to be found, in the most obscure corner of our country, a Pædobaptist minister so ignorant of the usages of your churches, as to be at a loss respecting the baptism of a new-born infant? No: we hardly think that Mr. Worcester himself believes, that even in the benighted State of Rhode-Island (as he is pleased to represent it*) such a *noviciate* could be found in all the denomination.

But should any one, like the honest *Fidus*, make the inquiry, would you suppose that after the business had been in complete operation for more than two centuries, it would require the united wisdom of a council to decide it? and which, after all, would only serve to show that the divine institution knew nothing about the baptism of infants, nor had given any direction concerning them?

On the whole, Sir, I feel constrained to say, that the more I examine the "clear and ample" testimony by which you have endeavoured to support your cause, the less evidence I perceive in its favour. If no "direct" evidence of infant baptism can be found during the two first centuries, it is strong presumptive proof, that no such practice existed. The apology that you offer for the want of this "direct" evidence, is extremely deficient. You seem to take it for granted that there were no Baptists in that day to dispute the right of infants; and therefore, "it should not be expected that much should be found particularly on the subject."

I suppose you will allow, Sir, that we have an authentic, though brief history of the general progress of the Christian religion, for thirty years after the death of Christ, in the Acts of the Apostles. Were there not frequent disputes during this period, that must unavoidably have produced "direct" testimony in favour of infant baptism, admitting it were then practised by the Apostles? The dispute introduced into the church at An-

* See Letters, p. 133.

tioch,* concerning circumcision, not only gave an opening, but seemed to render it absolutely necessary to say something "directly on the subject," in case baptism was then considered as a substitute for circumcision. I feel a confidence, Sir, that you will not presume to say, that any Pædobaptist council would have neglected such an opportunity, to state and enforce their favourite subject.

But another instance still more to my purpose, and which seemed to call, in the most imperious manner, for something "directly on the subject," will be seen in the account of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, about twenty-seven years after the crucifixion of Christ. The day after his arrival, says the historian, "Paul went in with us unto James: and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him; Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews that are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, *That they ought not to* CIRCUMCISE THEIR CHILDREN," &c. Is it possible, Sir, to conceive of a case, where it would be necessary to bring forward infant baptism, and explain its meaning, if this be not one? Had it been a known fact, as you contend, that the baptism of infants had been substituted by Christ in the room of their circumcision; and that this was so understood and practised by the Apostles, would not Paul have urged it in the present case? Indeed, Sir, it is impossible to suppose, that the above objection could ever have arisen in the minds of these Jewish Christians, had they understood the subject as you do: or, had any unjust insinuation been made against Paul, as though he neglected the children of believers, would not a simple statement of facts have silenced it forever? Had he only declared, that although he did not teach them to circumcise their children, yet (like the Pædobaptists of the present day,) he had constantly

* Acts xv.

insisted upon their giving them up in baptism; had he done this, he would have had no need to have gone through a course of ceremonial purification, in order to clear his character.

Do pause, my dear Sir, and ask yourself seriously, What possible reason can be assigned for the Apostle's total silence respecting the baptism of children, on an occasion which so urgently demanded it, had it then been understood by him and his brethren to have taken the place of circumcision? Does it not appear with irresistible clearness, that infant baptism, as a substitute for circumcision, had never yet been thought of? To me, I confess it does.

In all the transactions of the Christian church for the space of thirty years, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and this too, when they were setting in order the things that were wanting, not a single word is found respecting the baptism of infants; nor any thing which, by "fair implication," affords the least proof of it. Nor is there any thing (by your own explicit acknowledgment) "directly on the subject," in the writings of the first ages.

You pretend that there is no *direct* proof of *infant baptism* during the first ages, merely because there was no dispute about it. But is not this evading the difficulty? Was there any more dispute about the baptism of adults? I believe you will not say it. But is there any want of proof, that believing adults were baptized? You know, Sir, that there is abundant proof. "In the earliest times of the church," says Dr. Mosheim, "all who professed firmly to believe that Jesus was the only Redeemer of the world, and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner conformable to the purity of his holy religion, were immediately received among the disciples of Christ. This was all the preparation for *baptism* then required."* "The sacrament of *baptism*," continues the same writer, "was administered in this century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose,

* Vol. i. p. 114.

and was performed by an IMMERSION OF THE WHOLE BODY in the baptismal font."*

This perfectly agrees with the account given by the writer of the Acts. It is there said of the Samaritans, that "when they *believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized BOTH MEN AND WOMEN."† Another fair opening, Sir, to have mentioned *children*, had any been baptized. The total silence of both scripture and history, respecting the baptism of infants during the "first ages," affords more "clear and ample" proof that no such practice existed, than all the evidence you have been able to produce to the contrary.

Your attempts, Sir, to vindicate yourself from the charge of 'ingenious obscurity,' in the manner in which you quoted the fathers, goes fully, I conceive, to justify the remark. In stating the testimony of the Council of Carthage, of which you informed us in your note, that Cyprian was President, you give the following specimen:‡ "Cyprian (I observed) suffered martyrdom for the Christian faith, only about five years after the death of Origen.——I had informed you, Sir, that Origen was contemporary with Tertullian, that Tertullian was only eleven years old when Polycarp died, and was many years contemporary with Irenæus, a disciple of Polycarp, and that Polycarp was the angel of the church at Smyrna, to whom John the Revelator addressed his epistle." Upon this statement you ask, "Is there any obscurity, Sir, in all this?" Were I to answer, I should say, It does not appear remarkable either for conciseness or perspicuity. What was the object for which Cyprian was brought forward in the above character? Was it not to shew the time when an opinion in favour of infant baptism had been expressed by an ecclesiastical council? Why not then tell the time at once, without all this parade of names? They add no weight to the testimony of Cyprian.

The *obscure* manner in which you bring forward the testimony of the fathers in support of infant baptism,

* Vol. i. p. 126. † Acts viii. 12. ‡ Lett. p. 103.

also carries strong marks of design, to throw this evidence back as nigh as possible to the apostolic age. Why else have you so constantly kept out of sight the real distance from the Christian era, when these persons lived and wrote, and shrouded the subject in a long list of ancient names? The council to which *Fidus* proposed his question, you observe, was "only about one hundred and fifty years after the Apostles."* It would not, I suppose, have served your purpose quite so well, to have said, This council was held in the year of our Lord 256, as to place it within "*about* one hundred and fifty years of the Apostles;" that is, of the death of St. John, the very last of them.

On other occasions, Sir, I find you quote events somewhat differently. For instance; in stating the *call* of Abraham in your IVth Letter, you recur immediately to dates. This memorable event, you observe, was "somewhat more than two thousand years after the creation, and about four hundred and twenty-six years after the flood." It is acknowledged, that there is no obscurity in this. But, Sir, if, instead of giving these dates, you had "informed" us, that "when the Lord said unto Abraham, *Get thee out from thy country, and from thy kindred*, &c. he was in the seventy-fifth year of his age, and that he was born only two years after the death of Noah, who lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood, and six hundred before it, and who was born only one hundred and twenty-six years after the death of Adam, the father of the human race:" would you say there was no obscurity in all this? I believe, Sir, this is nearly correct; but would it be easy to perceive, by this statement, in what year of the world any one of these events took place? I think it would not. After all, is it not as intelligible as your account of the Council of Carthage, of which you inform us, that "Cyprian was President, who suffered martyrdom only five years after the death of Origen; who was contemporary with Tertullian; who was eleven years old when Polycarp died; and who was the angel of the church at Smyrna, to whom John the Revelator addressed his epistle?"

* Lett. p. 103.

I shall reserve any further remarks on the testimony of the ancient fathers, for another place. And as the remainder of your Letter, excepting the closing paragraph, is directed against Mr. Merrill, and not me, I shall pass it wholly unnoticed, unless I may incidentally, in answering some of your other Letters, advert to some sentence in it.

In your concluding paragraph, Sir, after having satirized Mr. Merrill, in a manner which I am persuaded you would feel in every nerve in your system, if it were retorted upon you; you proceed to inform us of the high satisfaction which you have derived from the consideration, that neither he, nor myself, have shewn your statements "with respect to the primitive practice of the church, to be in the least point incorrect." "My statements most certainly," you add, "were not made at random, but were the result of deliberate and diligent research." We have already seen and examined all that you have brought forth by this "deliberate and diligent research;" and, if this be the whole that you have been able to find, the Baptists may sit down composed; for we think their sentiments are in no danger from any thing which you can produce, from the writers of the two first centuries.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XXI.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR XXIst Letter now calls for my attention. But as much of it is a mere recapitulation of what has been already noticed, a few things only remain to be answered.

Your principal object in this Letter, to use your own words, is to "present in one connected, but very compendious view, the grounds on which" infant baptism "rests." In order to which you tell us, 1. "In

God's covenant with his church," (the Abrahamic covenant) "children are expressly *connected* with their parents; and, on the ground of this connexion, it has been divinely instituted, that parents should have the initiating seal administered to their infant seed."

By the above covenant, the male seed of Abraham and his descendants, which may be supposed to comprise about *one half* of all their seed, was to be circumcised; but no provision, as I have ever seen, for initiating female children. To argue the right of female infants, from what Paul said of believing adults; namely, that "*there is neither male nor female*, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus;" is arguing from false premises. The conclusion here rests upon this postulatum, that *female infants are Christ's*, in the sense of the above text; which is not true.

You proceed to say, 2. "Not only is there no intimation in the scriptures, that the covenant *connexion* between parents and children has been dissolved; but we are clearly taught that this important connexion was to continue under the present dispensation."

In support of this, you have first quoted Jer. xxx. 20; "*Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me.*" This, beyond all doubt, is a prophecy respecting the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. But it seems that you can see no other way in which the promise can be fulfilled, that *their children should be as aforetime*, unless the children of Gentile believers are admitted to baptism! A very extraordinary conclusion indeed! We can hardly conceive of one more forced and unnatural.* In the whole of the context there does not appear the most distant allusion to the subject under consideration. *Pool* gives the following very natural comment upon the text. "Their posterity also shall be as happy, and as much in repute, as they were before their carrying into Babylon."† The prophet Zechariah, alluding to the same

* A good old Pædobaptist minister, whose zeal sometimes outstripped his knowledge, once said, He could prove infant baptism from Hosea vii. 8. *Ephraim is a cake not turned.* I should suppose equally as well as from Jer. xxx. 20.

† Pool in loc.

event, the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, says, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age: *and the streets of the city shall be full of* BOYS AND GIRLS *playing in the streets thereof.*"* This I conceive to be the meaning of the passage you have quoted.

Your next text is that in Malachi, respecting the ministry of John the Baptist, which has already been considered. (See Lett. XIX.) From this you proceed to notice again what Christ said concerning little children; "*Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me:* FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

Did Christ mean by the kingdom of heaven the visible church? If not, it has no relation to the argument. If so, did he mean to teach his disciples, that the kingdom of heaven, or visible church, was made up of little children? or was it his meaning, that it consisted of characters which, in many respects, resembled *little children?* Does the text absolutely import, that even *these children* which were brought to him were either a part of the visible church on earth, or that they infallibly belonged to the kingdom of glory? I conceive not: but in either sense it proves too much for your purpose. You will please to remember, Sir, that you do not allow that your children, even such as are baptized, belong to the church in any proper sense. You have been obliged to deny their membership, in order to appear consistent in not treating them as members. The place which you now allow them to occupy, is a sort of "covenant connexion with their parents."† This differs widely from the text; for Christ does not say, "such are *connected* with the kingdom of heaven;" but "*of* SUCH IS *the kingdom of heaven.*"

The term *such*, in this text, does not appear to be used as a term of identity, but of likeness; agreeably to a common mode of expression used by Christ. "The kingdom of heaven," saith he, "is *like* unto a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field."

* Zech. viii. 4, 5. † Letter, p. 112.

He adds, in another parable, that it "is *like* unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal." Surely no one will argue from this, that the kingdom of heaven (whatever may be meant by it) consists of *mustard-seed* and *leaven!* But only, that the rapid growth of the one, and the effects produced by the fermentation of the other, might serve to illustrate the success of the gospel, and the effects of divine grace in the hearts of men.

That you may see the inconclusiveness of your argument, please for a moment to admit what is certainly possible, and not very improbable, i. e. that part of these children, if not all, were females; then consequently they had not been initiated by circumcision; and, as you inform us, baptism had not as yet been substituted for it, they could not have been baptized: it will then follow, that if these children could belong to the kingdom of heaven without the initiating *seal*, as you term it, other children may belong to the same kingdom without it. Until you can therefore prove, that it was on account of the covenant relation of these children to their believing parents, Christ said, of such is the kingdom of heaven, it can afford no proof in favour of your argument.

I am pleased, Sir, that you have given up one important point, which the Baptists have long contended with your denomination; viz. that you "do not suppose that these little children were brought to Christ for baptism." This very text has been the foundation of much eloquent declamation in favour of infant baptism.*

Your other arguments have been considered in a previous Letter,† excepting your remarks on 1 Cor. vii. 14. *Else were your children unclean, but now are they* HOLY. This holiness, however, you tell us, was not "real, positive, *internal* holiness." Pray, Sir, what sort of holiness can it be, to possess none of these qualities? If not "real," then we must suppose it only imaginary, or fictitious. If not "positive," then it can be only *negative*. If not "internal holiness," then it can be only *external*. That is *imaginary, negative, outside holiness!*

* Vid. Dr. Osgood's Serm. on Bap. † See Lett. XVIII.

In order to render your subject still more lucid, you go on to say, "That by virtue of their relation to Abraham, his descendants were considered as being in a *federal* or *covenant* sense, *holy*;" and "that the *children* of God's people, under the present dispensation, are to be considered as *holy*, in the same *federal* or *covenant* sense." That is, that they are possessed of neither "real, positive," nor "internal holiness!" And are these the characters of whom Christ said, *Of* SUCH *is the kingdom of heaven?* What elevated conceptions of the holy nature of the CHURCH OF THE FIRST BORN IN HEAVEN, must the mind entertain from your explanation of this *federal* or *covenant* holiness! Can this be the holiness for which you are so warmly contending with the Baptists? If so, may I not here adopt the language of my opponent, "Alas! to what mere shadows will a man not resort, when he has no solid arguments of which to avail himself!" But I hasten to consider your next topic.

3. "As we are clearly informed," say you, "that the relation of children to the church was to continue under the present dispensation, so we have evidence *sufficiently clear*, that, by the Apostles, children were baptized." Not quite so clear, I imagine, Sir, as you could wish. But we will examine it.

On reading the above statement, it is natural for the eye to run eagerly over the subjoined observations, in order to find this "clear and satisfactory" evidence on a point so long disputed. But how great is the disappointment, when, after examining every sentence, nothing can be perceived "directly to the point," or which proves it by "fair implication!"

You begin, Sir, with the great commission which Christ gave to his disciples after his resurrection. But how does it appear from this, that Christ intended that infants, which could not be taught, should be baptized? "In his commission to his Apostles," you observe, "his direction was, that *all* NATIONS should be *baptized*," and "children constitute a part of every nation."* This, Sir, is proving your point, with a witness. But does it not prove rather too much? If because "children con-

* Lett. p. 115.

stitute a part of every nation," they are therefore to be baptized, will it not prove that all the children of a nation have a right to baptism, whether their parents are Jews, Turks, or Heathens? Yea, more; if untaught, unbelieving children must be baptized, because they are a *part* of all nations; then unbelieving adults must be baptized also, for they are equally a part of all nations.

I know of but one limitation contained in the commission; and that is, that such only are to be baptized as have been previously taught so as to become disciples. But if the commission requires or admits the baptism of *any* who are untaught, it will equally require or admit the baptism of *all* who are untaught. For if the direction to baptize be not limited to such as are taught so as to become disciples, it is not limited at all. If infants can be made *disciples*, or "entered learners," by baptism, adults also may be made disciples in the same way. They are certainly as capable (to say the least) of being taught afterwards, as infants are.

These, Sir, are some of the unavoidable consequences that follow upon your hypothesis, that children must be baptized because they "constitute a part of every nation." I should suppose it would require the utmost stretch of "sectarian credulity," to believe that such was the intention of Christ in giving the commission. And yet from such premises as these, you advance to this bold conclusion; "then it is *plain*, that the Apostles were *authorized* and *enjoined* to baptize children."

Your fanciful application of the prediction in Isaiah, that Messiah should *sprinkle many nations*, had "evident reference to baptism;" and that it is now fulfilling in the "sprinkling of infants," I leave unmolested; as I am persuaded that, with candid men, it can never be thought to have the most distant bearing upon the argument.

You next proceed, Sir, to state as a *matter of fact*, that "the Apostles actually baptized, not only believing parents, who had never before been baptized, but also their households;" by which you evidently mean their unbelieving children. This, Sir, is by no means a correct statement. It is taking for granted, what cannot be admitted without proof. It supposes that the master or

parent only was a believer, and that all his household, whether adults or infants, were baptized upon his faith: but you have exhibited no evidence of this, nor is there any in the scripture in favour of it, but much to the contrary.

The sacred history affords not so much as a shadow of proof, that there was a single infant in either of the households you have mentioned. But will it be thought strange, that there should be *three* households without any infants? Let it be remembered, that there were four families in the ark, whose salvation *by water* the Apostle Peter makes a figure of our baptism, and yet we know for certain, that there was not a single infant in either of them. But would it not be equally strange, if there were not some *adults* in these three households, besides the persons mentioned? But if so, it will prove fatal to your argument in another point of light; for if all that belonged to the house were baptized, upon the faith of the head of the family, then adults as well as infants were baptized upon the credit of another's faith. The supposition is certainly as fair and rational, that there were adults in these households, as that there were infants.

We have now, Sir, examined all the "evidence" which you have brought to prove, "that by the Apostles, children were baptized;" and can only say, that if it has been made *sufficiently clear*, we have to regret that we have not been able to discern it. The same evidence, however, Sir, has been brought by your predecessors over and over again; and as often refuted by mine. To pretend that a point is "sufficiently clear," and after all, not be able to make out a single particle of decided evidence in its favour, look much more like *wishing* it to be believed, than like *proving* it to be true.

You proceed, 4. "As infant baptism was practised by the Apostles in pursuance of their commission; so it appears from the most authentic testimony, that it was practised in the church universally for many ages after them."

In my reply, Sir, to your last Letter, I trust it has been fully demonstrated, that all your "clear and ample proof" from the writers of the two first centuries, has

furnished no evidence of the existence of infant baptism during that period. But as you have found "nothing directly on the subject," in the writings of the first century, you now attempt, by the *indirect* testimony of these fathers, as they are called, to give support to your cause. In order to which, you inform us, that "In the first ages after Christ, *baptism* and *regeneration* were considered as the same thing." You refer to Dr. Wall for "ample proof" of this point. I have not his History of Infant Baptism at hand; but his "Defence" of that work is now before me. In this work, in reply to Mr. *Whiston*'s objections, the subject is brought into view. According to this, the passage from *Irenæus*, which has been considered in the preceding Letter, is the foundation on which the opinion rests. The construction now given of the passage from this ancient writer, is liable to several weighty objections. As 1. that by the manner in which he recorded the different ages, by *infants*, he did not intend new-born babes, but infants eight or ten years old, who had been catechized. It seems a point established beyond reasonable controversy, that the terms παις, βρεφος, βρεφυλλιον, puer, puerulus, parvulus, &c. are used indiscriminately for minors.* 2. It is doubtful in the highest degree, whether either Justin or Irenæus did refer to what Dr. Wall calls "*baptismal regeneration*" in the passages quoted from them. If this could be ascertained, it would prove that they had, at this early period, departed from the pure doctrine of the gospel. For I believe the sentiment is now almost universally condemned by Protestants, as erroneous; and if erroneous now, it must have been so then. The sense you contend for, is no where countenanced by the scriptures, nor by the common language of Christians. John iii. 5. & Tit. iii. 5. The very passages which have been adduced in support of the sentiment, prove exactly the contrary. The former, if it has any allusion to baptism, must be referred to the baptism of a believer; for it is connected with being *born of the Spirit*. The answer to Nicodemus, in the fifth verse of this chapter, is predicated on what Jesus had said in the third: *Except a man be born again, he cannot*

* See Robinson's Hist. Bapt. p. 133—135.

see the kingdom of God. And in the fifth, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* If by the *kingdom of God*, be meant the visible gospel church, and being *born of water*, is being baptized, then it is plain that none could belong to *this church* before baptism was instituted. Where then will you place Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all their pious descendants? Were they baptized? Or if, by the *kingdom of God*, we are to understand heaven itself, will any believe that none will go to heaven but such as are baptized? The latter, you know, Sir, was the sense attached to the passage by the early defenders of infant baptism. This appears to have been the sense of Tertullian, who advised to delay the baptism of infants which had been catechised, to a more advanced period, "except in danger of death." This too led to all the superstitious fooleries which have been attached to the practice. Such as *Midwives* and *Nurses* baptizing new-born infants, supposed to be in danger of death. And does not the *practice* of some professed Christians consign to everlasting wo, the hapless infant who may chance to die unbaptized? Why else is the *funeral service* of the Episcopal church refused to an unbaptized infant?* Yea, more; in some instances, why have the rights of *sepulture* been refused to unbaptized infants? Yes,—"Even dust to spread o'er dust, a charity their dogs enjoy."†

But, Sir, you allow that these ancient fathers held to another kind of *regeneration*, effected by the Holy Spirit. Were it not to serve a purpose, I conceive the passage you have quoted from the "Apostolical Justin Martyr,"

* A few years since, I was called to attend the funeral of an infant in this town, in a family which I was informed belonged to the Episcopal church. I asked where the Rev. Dr.—— was? and was answered, He was out of town. Where is the Rev. Mr. ——? It was said, He was engaged. At length, the gentleman of the house told me plainly, "The child was not baptized!" To this I replied, that I had the happiness to believe the child was gone equally as safe, as though it had been baptized.

† See an account published a few years ago by the Rev. Mr. *Burt*, of Plymouth Dock, respecting a child of his congregation which died while the parents were on a visit at Saltash, and which was refused a grave by the pious Curate, in the *Cemetery* belonging to his parish, merely because it was unbaptized.

would never have been construed but in the latter sense. You give his words as follows: "They are regenerated by the same way by which we were regenerated; for they are washed with water in the name of God the Father and Lord of all things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ says, unless ye be *regenerated*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

If the writer of this sentence held to the scriptural doctrine of *regeneration*, the paragraph will be plain and intelligible. But in the sense which you explain it, it is both tautological and heterodox. For if by *regeneration* he meant baptism, or washing, (as you explain the word,) you make him say, "For they are washed with water," because "they had been washed in water." There can be no doubt but by being "*washed* in the name of God the Father," &c. he intended baptism; and if this was in consequence of their having been *regenerated* by the Holy Spirit, it is all perfectly correct, and in agreement with the sacred scriptures. But to say, that they were washed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, because they had been *regenerated by baptism*, is absolute nonsense. The last sentence seems to confirm the sense I have given. "For Christ says, *Unless ye be regenerated, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" Certainly, Sir, mere water baptism, without spiritual regeneration, does not fit a person for the kingdom of heaven, taken in either sense of the word,—yourself being judge.

These remarks will equally apply to the paragraph you have quoted from Irenæus, where you render the word *regenerated* unto God, "baptized."

You observe, 2. "The primitive church held baptism to have come in the place of circumcision." And add, "This, again, is a point too clear to be contested."

It would seem, Sir, that the business was not fully understood in the year of our Lord 256, when it was submitted to the Council of Carthage whether infants under eight days old might be lawfully baptized. Nor can I see by what authority their "African reverences" presumed to depart from the law of circumcision, admitting that "baptism had taken its place." And yet, without pre-

tending that Christ had given any *new law* respecting the baptism of infants, they, and you after them, have added the other sex, which were unknown in the original institution, and presume to administer the ordinance to both, and at a time too when it was absolutely forbidden by the law of circumcision! It is presumed that those who take such freedoms with a divine law, can have no great difficulty in accommodating it to their own wishes.

The quotations, Sir, which you have made from these ancient writers, give us a very obscure and doubtful view of your subject. You quote Justin Martyr as saying, "We also, who by him have had access to God, have not received this *carnal circumcision*, but the *spiritual circumcision*; and we have received it by *baptism*, by the mercy of God, because we were sinners."

Permit me, Sir, to ask, Do you believe that "*spiritual circumcision*," which is made *without hands*, is produced by baptism? If you do, I shall cease to wonder at your zeal for the baptism of infants, if by it you suppose the heart is circumcised to love God. If you do not believe it, then, do you not implicitly charge Justin with propagating a most dangerous error, or implicate yourself as a bad commentator?

Your quotation from Basil is equally irrelevant. I should suppose it utterly impossible for any person to believe, that "the *circumcision made without hands*," meant water baptism. I imagine it would be very difficult to perform baptism decently, *without hands*, even if we allowed sprinkling to be the mode. If you should succeed, Sir, in proving, that Basil held, that to be baptized in water, and to be a subject of "the *circumcision made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ," meant the same thing; I must either give up the man, as the author of error, or renounce my senses in order to believe it to be truth.

I conceive, Sir, that you might with as much propriety, argue from what Ananias said to Saul, as from the above. *And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

* Acts xxii. 16.

Would Ananias have said this to Saul, when in a state of unbelief? Would any minister, who values his character as a man of piety, call upon a manifest unbeliever to wash away his sins by baptism? We certainly think he would not. And yet it would not be less absurd, than what you endeavour to make these fathers vindicate. "It is allowed," says Justin, "to *all persons* to receive it by the same way," that is, *spiritual circumcision* by baptism. This, as you explain it, is indeed expanding wide the flood-gate of error! "All persons," must certainly mean more than infants. And if one may lawfully come without any evidence of renewing grace, why not another? Why not all?

3. "The earliest direct testimonies," say you, "which we have on the subject, are clear and decisive, that infant baptism was uniformly practised in the church, in the Apostles' days, and downwards, for many ages."

Here, Sir, you again run over your "incidental and indirect" proof, repeating the story of the sixty-six African Bishops, and refer us once more to your note in your Two Discourses, where you have given such "clear and ample" proof from the writers of the two first centuries. All this, Sir, we have seen before, and bestowed upon it the consideration to which it was entitled. We therefore hasten to your next witness.

"About three hundred years after the Apostles," say you, "the testimonies furnished by the Pelagian controversy are full and invincible." As this controversy commenced in the fifth century, when we do not deny the existence of infant baptism, it cannot be supposed to furnish any decisive evidence on the subject.

If Mosheim has given a fair statement of the sentiments of Pelagius, he differed very little in doctrine from our modern Arminians,* and like them held to infant baptism. At the head of the orthodox party, who were his opposers, you present Austin, (Augustin) as asking Pelagius, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sin, if they have none? Infant baptism, the whole church practises; it was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use." You proceed to observe, that

* Mosh. vol. ii. p. 84.

"with this argument the Pelagians were constantly pres-
ed by Austin and Jerome, and all the orthodox fathers."
"But how," you ask, "did the Pelagians get rid of i-
pressure? Did they deny the fact? Did they allege th-
infant baptism was not a divine institution; was not a
apostolic practice, but a mere human invention? "N-
Sir:" you reply, "but Pelagius himself conceded, that h-
never heard of any, not even the most impious hereti-
who denied baptism to infants." And is this, Sir, you
invincible proof? Should you give it a trial, you woul-
I think, soon perceive its strength. The Pelagian
held, that "the sins of our first parents were imputed
to them alone, and not to their posterity; that we d-
rive no corruption from their fall, but are born as pu-
and unspotted as Adam came out of the forming ha-
of his Creator." The Arminians, Sir, of your denom-
nation, hold the same. What if you should press the
with the argument of Augustin? Do you think th-
would give up infant baptism? No, Sir, not one of the-
They would assign other reasons for baptizing them, b-
sides the *washing away* of ORIGINAL SIN. And so d-
Pelagius, who insisted "that *infant baptism* was not a
sign or *seal* of the remission of sins, but a *mark* of admi-
sion to the kingdom of heaven, which was only open to
the pure in heart:"* and such he considered infants to
be. When you can convince your Arminian brethre-,
Sir, by the argument of Augustin, of the impropriety of
their baptizing infants, and oblige them to give it up, or
cease to deny original sin, we will then acknowledge th-t
the Pelagian controversy affords some proof in favour of
your argument.

The dispute between Augustin and Pelagius was n-t
about infant baptism, for they both appear to be alik-
tenacious of it; but concerning original sin. While t-e
former contended that infants were to be baptized for
the "remission of sins," the latter argued their right to
that ordinance from the supposition that *they* had not-,
but were as pure "as Adam was when he came out of
the forming hand of his Creator." After this fair a-d
candid statement, I am willing the public should de-t

* Mosh. vol. ii. p. 84.

down as much in favour of your argument from this testimony, as they may judge proper.

I add one remark more upon the method of your stating this testimony. "Let it be remembered," say you, "this was only about three hundred years after the Apostles." You then add, "It is now about three hundred years since the reformation from Popery under Luther and Calvin." This fully justifies a remark which I some time since made, that you manifest a disposition to crowd back the evidence of infant baptism as nigh the apostolic age as possible.

By this management in dating, you gain nearly one hundred years. The fact is, it was but just three hundred years last June (1810) since Calvin was born. But you date the other from the death of St. John, the last of the Apostles, which was one hundred years after the Christian era. I see no reason why you should not date from the death of the former, as well as from that of the latter.*

"But," you ask, "where is there a man of any knowledge, who does not know whether the fathers of the reformation held, or not, to the baptism of infants?"

And do you suppose, Sir, that we have the same advantage to know whether the fathers of the three first centuries held to infant baptism, as we have to know the sentiments of Luther and Calvin? You certainly will not pretend it. Nor can it be fairly argued, that even Augustin and Pelagius, and their contemporaries, had the same advantages to know the practice of the Christian church in the ages which preceded them, that we enjoy of knowing the sentiments and practice of the Reformers. From the lapse of time, it is extremely difficult to determine what they did know of the preceding history of the church. The art of printing, so necessary to the correct diffusion of general knowledge, was unknown at that period. It also appears, that a multiplicity of rites and ceremonies were from time to time, during the same period, imposed on the church. And I may add, that where infant baptism was first named, and where the above controversy originated (to say the least) was not

* Calvin died May 27, 1564. Only 236 years since.

the most enlightened quarter of the globe. But if "noth-ing directly" on the subject of infant baptism could be found in all the writings extant for the two first centu-ries after the commencement of the reformation by Lu-ther and Calvin, I believe you would acknowledge that even now there might be some dispute whether it has been uniformly practised from them to the present time. This is precisely the case with regard to infant baptism in the first ages of the church.

If, Sir, you will read with candour Robinson's "His-tory of Baptism," (London edition, 4to. A. D. 1790) I think you may find evidence much more satisfactory of the introduction of infant baptism in the third and fourth centuries than you will ever be able to find of its exist-ence in the apostolic age. I consider myself no more obliged to explain the manner of its introduction into the church, than you are to tell how it should happen, as Dr. Mosheim declares, that "this sect (the Anabap-tists) started up all of a sudden, in several countries, at the same point of time, under leaders of different talents, and different intentions, and at the *very period* when the first contests of the Reformers with the Roman pontiffs drew the attention of the world" to them.* If there had been none before, it would be impossible to account for this without a miracle.

I see nothing more in this Letter which requires at-tention, excepting the extraordinary style of your con-cluding paragraph. I cannot say, that this "is in a manner peculiar to yourself;" for you seem to have dropt the modest language of the pastor, and to have assumed the gasconading airs of chivalry. Pray, Sir, reflect a mo-ment upon the following; "Upon the ground of these evidences, therefore," say you, "*I feel myself* STRONG and can hear *undismayed* all the vehement declamations, censures, and anathemas of Antipædobaptism. Yes, Sir, UNDISMAYED, and UNMOVED, I can hear myself called a bigotted *Judaizer!* an abettor of *Antichrist!* an adherent of the *Beast!* a *liar*, and deceiver! and all the opprobri-ous names which Mr. Merrill and his zealous partizans have thought proper so liberally to bestow upon me!

* Mosh. vol. iv. p. 427.

On reading this paragraph, one hardly knows whether most to applaud your uncommon *firmness*, or to regret that your imagination is so haunted with apprehensions of Mr. Merrill, as not to be able to mention his name without discovering so much perturbation and resentment. But as this does not concern me, I leave it to your own reflections.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XXII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR twenty-second Letter comes in course to be reviewed. The main object of this is, to prove that *sprinkling* rather than immersion, is the scriptural apostolic mode of baptism. This you attempt, and seem as confidently to imagine that you have succeeded in proving it, as any one article in your preceding Letters. I will not question your sincerity; but I freely confess, Sir, I am unable to comprehend the reasons by which you satisfy your conscience, in asserting a sentiment so directly contrary to the plainest historical evidence. You must certainly know, that no one *fact* relating to the primitive Christian church is established with more clearness, than that immersion was universally practised for twelve or thirteen centuries, excepting in particular cases. And even in these cases, sprinkling was considered rather as a substitute, than as the thing itself.

This proof was amply exhibited in the book on which you have animadverted in the Letters before me. It was furnished from Pædobaptist historians and divines of the highest respectability. Among the number were Eusebius, Socrates, Mosheim, Cave, Luther, Calvin, and many others not less to be depended upon. Particularly, Sir,

Dr. Wall's testimony was produced as being unequiv
cally to the point. How it should happen, that you hav
forsaken him in this instance, when, in most cases, yo
seem to consult him as an oracle, is indeed unaccountabl
Had you, like the greater part of the ancient writers o
your side of the question, honestly confessed the truth
that *immersion was the primitive mode*, your reasons fo
practising sprinkling would have been heard with th
greatest attention and patience. Such a confession, it
believed, would have done honour both to your head an
heart; nor would it have injured your cause in the leas
For I persuade myself, that after all your labour an
pains to prove sprinkling to have been the *apostolic mod*
you have been obliged to rest its support on such slender
circumstantial, and indirect evidence, as to weaken th
credibility of its truth, with a candid mind. This proo
however, such as it is, I shall briefly notice presently.

That I considered you to have conceded that immer
sion was practised in the days of Christ and his Apostles
is true. I know not that you meant it, but I still thin
your words imply it. Possibly, Sir, however, I may no
understand the "logical difference between THE *questio*
and A *question*." But whether I do or not, I freely ow
I do not perceive that it would essentially affect the infer
ence. By your statement it stands thus: "THE questio
properly between us is not this, whether any were bap
tized in the days of Christ and his Apostles by immer
sion," &c. Transposed it would stand thus, 'It is not
question properly between us, whether any were baptized
&c. Is it not fairly supposed, in both cases, that ther
was no question but that some were baptized in the day
of the Apostles by immersion? But, Sir, the sentimen
is most indubitably contained in the latter or positiv
part of your question; which is, "Whether immersion
or dipping, be the *only* valid mode of baptism?" Wi
you say, Sir, that it is not here fairly implied, that "im
mersion, or dipping, is *a valid* mode of baptism? To plac
then these two members of your statement so nigh t
each other, as to show their bearing upon the argumen
and they will stand thus. "The question is not wheth
er any were baptized in the days of the Apostles by im

mersion," but "whether immersion be the *only valid* mode of baptism." If this does not clearly imply that IMMERSION *was practised in the days of the Apostles*, the public will do you the justice, to deduct from my argument all the advantage which I gained by the supposition. But if it be fairly implied, to how little purpose is all your learned criticism upon the "logical difference between A and THE!"

"Another statement," say you, "which I had occasion to make, was as follows: "It is, however, a *well-supported fact*, that in the first ages of Christianity, and for twelve or fifteen hundred years afterwards, *baptism* by sprinkling, or affusion was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid." "Even those, who, in *ordinary cases*, *baptized by immersion*, did not deny but admitted the validity of baptism by sprinkling or affusion." It appears to me, that to authorize the above statement, you must have had recourse to a different class of ecclesiastical writers from those which have come to my knowledge. Does not Eusebius, Cave, and Witsius furnish the most unequivocal proof to the contrary?* The latter of these was indeed referred to by me, rather than quoted, as the volume happened at the time to be mislaid. But as it entirely refutes what you call "a well-supported fact," I think proper to add it in this place. After saying, that "it is certain that both John and the disciples of Christ, *ordinarily used* DIPPING; whose example was followed by the ancient church;" he adds, "It cannot be denied, but the native signification of the words βαπτειν and βαπτιξειν, is to *plunge* or *dip*." In support of this sense he quoted *Salmasius*, a French writer, of the sixteenth century, "of uncommon abilities, and immense erudition;" who says, "Βαπτειν, from which βαπτιζειν, signifies *immersion*, NOT ASPERSION; nor did the ancients baptize *any* but by dipping, either once or thrice: *except clinicks*, or persons confined to a sick bed, because these were baptized in a manner they could bear; not in an entire font, as they who put their heads under water, but their body was *besprinkled all over*. Cypr. 4. Epist. 7." "Thus," continues he, "when Novatus, in his sickness, received

* See p. 95, 96, 309, of my book.

baptism, he was *but sprinkled all over.* Euseb. 6. Hist. c. 43."

After comparing this *testimony* with your "*bare assertion,*" that "it is a well-supported fact, that baptism by sprinkling, or affusion, was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid," during the first ages, the public will decide, whether you or the above-named gentlemen have given a correct statement. Your remarks upon the "many or few," who, in *ordinary cases*, baptized by immersion, are too trifling to require a reply.

I proceed now, Sir, to consider your direct arguments in favour of sprinkling. You begin by observing, 1. "The Greek words *baptizo* and *baptismos*, rendered baptize, and baptism, do not necessarily nor *primarily* signify immersion any more than affusion or sprinkling." The contrary of this has been shewn in the most "clear and ample manner," in my book on baptism (Part ii. Sect. 4 & 5.) If any thing more could be thought necessary, in order to place the subject out of all dispute, with such as are willing to receive the truth, I would add the testimony of Doctor Campbell, a late learned Scotch writer. He observes, that "in several modern languages we have, in what regards Jewish and Christian rites, generally followed the usage of the old Latin version, though the authors of that version have not been entirely uniform in their method. Some words they have *transferred* from the original into their language; others they have *translated.* But it would not always be easy to find their reason for making this difference. Thus the word περιτομη they have translated *circumcisio*, which exactly corresponds in etymology, but the word βαπτισμα they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible into Latin as the former. *Immersio, tinctio*, answers as exactly in the one case as *circumcisio* in the other." He further adds, "We have deserted the Greek names where the Latins have deserted them. Hence we say *circumcision*, and not *peritomy*; and we do not say *immersion* but *baptism.* Yet when the language furnishes us with materials for a version so exact and analogical, such a version conveys the sense more perspicuously than a foreign name. *For this*

reason, I should think the word *immersion* (which though of Latin origin, is an English noun, regularly formed from the verb *to immerse*) a better name than baptism, were we now at liberty to make a choice."*

The testimony, Sir, of this respectable writer goes directly to prove one important point which the Baptists have long contended; i. e. That the words *baptizo* and *baptisma* were never translated; but only *anglicised*, by changing *o* in the first into *e*; and leaving out the *a* in the last. Had these words been translated, there would have been an end to the dispute; or rather, there never would have been any dispute about the mode of baptism.

The above extract from Dr. Campbell, I consider as a full answer to all that the Rev. Mr. Sweat has written: and indeed to all that you have said, or can say upon *bapto*, *baptizo*, and *izo*; and of their consequential meaning of "*wetting*, *washing*, or *cleansing*." These may indeed be said to be the consequence of immersion, or dipping; but they are never the consequence of your mode of baptizing; for you neither *wet*, *wash*, nor *cleanse* an infant, by sprinkling a drop or two of water in its face. As this plain statement is not intended as a reflection upon your denomination, it is hoped it will not be taken as such.

You suppose that if it "had been the intention of the Saviour to confine his followers to dipping or immersion, the proper word to express this ordinance would have been not *baptizo*, but *bapto*." But would you not have raised the same objections against that, as against the one used? Would you not have told us, that Nebuchadnezzar's body was not immersed, but only (*bapto*) *wet* with the dew of heaven? (Dan. iv. 33.) Is it not more rational to suppose, that if the Saviour had intended sprinkling as the mode of baptism, he would have used neither *bapto* nor *baptizo*, but *raino*, or its derivative, *rantizo*, which uniformly signifies to sprinkle? Had the Saviour, therefore, certainly intended that his followers should be immersed, is there any word in the Greek language which would have expressed it more unequivocally?

This, Sir, is the ground we take with those who deny future endless punishment. They contend that αἰωνιος

* Campbell's Prelim. Diss. p. 131.

from αιων is sometimes used, when a limited duration is intended; but we argue (and I think justly) that there is no word in the Greek language more constantly used to express infinite duration than αιωνιος.*

You observe, 2. "There is no evidence that any of the baptisms, either by John the Baptist, or by the Apostles, were performed by immersion." To get rid of the former, you have prefixed a note to this paragraph, in which you say, "that John's baptism was not Christian baptism." Pray, Sir, do be so good as to tell us what baptism it was? It seems you must have strangely forgotten, or else do not believe your own theory. Have you not contended, that the Jewish was the "pre-Christian church?" That this continued without cessation until the commencement of the "post-Christian church." And did John's baptism belong to neither? Was he who was the morning-star, the precursor of the SUN *of Righteousness*, an outcast from both? Pause a moment, my dear Sir, and think where your theory will lead you! Your other remarks under this head have been so often answered, that I pass them unnoticed.

3. "The circumstances," say you, "attending the baptisms recorded in the scripture, are strongly in favour of sprinkling, or affusion, as the mode in which they were performed."

In proof of this, you represent John as choosing "the open country about Jordan as a place favourable by reason of the plenty of water, (*polla hudata, many little streams*) for the multitudes with their beasts; but remote from any accommodations for the changing their apparel; thousands of the Jews, from all parts of Judea, were baptized by John."

Several things in this statement demand consideration; not because they are new, and have never been answered; but because they are calculated to mislead the mind. 1. John's watery station, you represent as being designedly chosen, for the accommodation of the people and their beasts with drink. A very extraordinary conclu-

* Should it be objected, that αιωνιος, rendered *ever*, in Matt. xxv. 41. and in 1 Thess. iv. 17, is more definitive; we should still say αιωνιος is more frequently used to express unlimited duration.

sion! How came you, Sir, to know that they had any *beasts* with them? The scriptures do not inform us whether they travelled in carriages, on horseback, or on foot. Is there not as much reason to suppose that when all the tribes went up to Jerusalem thrice a year to worship, they took their beasts with them, as when they went out to hear the Baptist? But, on these occasions, we hear nothing about any provision for supplying the multitudes and their beasts with water. And yet we have every reason to suppose the collection of people was vastly greater. On the whole, Sir, this explanation is so foreign from the scripture account, which mentions the waters of Jordan and Enon only with reference to baptism, without the most distant allusion to an accommodation of the multitudes and their beasts with drink, that I have long considered it as one of the most illogical, unnatural evasions that almost ever was practised to get rid of a difficulty.

But, Sir, you have suggested another very formidable obstacle to John's administering the ordinance by immersion. "They were," say you, "remote from any accommodations for changing their apparel." You will permit me, Sir, again to refresh your memory; for it seems you have forgotten that you told us in a note in your Discourses, and brought Dr. Wall and Vossius to prove it, that "the ancient Christians, when they were baptized by immersion, *were all baptized naked*, whether they were men, women or children?"* We must charitably suppose you believed this to be true, or you would not, for the sake of disparaging immersion, have inserted it in your book. But if true, it must forever silence all objections on account of the want of a "change of apparel."

But, Sir, had you been at Sedgwick, at the baptism in May, 1805, you might have seen the difficulty obviated in a way perfectly compatible with *decency*. A number of persons, of both sexes, who came to the water without previously determining to be baptized; but feeling impelled by duty, to follow their Lord's example, went forward in the ordinance, just as they were dressed to

* Disc. Note, p. 74.

attend meeting. And although they had no dry cloth[es] with them to put on, I have never heard to this day, th[at] any of them suffered the least inconveniency from it.

Your conjectures respecting the three thousand; th[e] household of Cornelius; the Jailer and his; that "th[e] *circumstances* are clearly in favour of *sprinkling* or *affusion*" cannot be admitted as proof. To be sure, we are not to[ld] particularly how they were baptized; but this we kno[w], that whenever the act of baptizing has been describ[ed], it has been by *going down into the water, and being bapti-ed, and coming up out of it.* Hence we rationally co[n]-clude, when not described, it was performed in the sa[me] manner. You observe,

4. "The signification of baptism is clearly in favo[ur] of affusion or sprinkling." "Baptism," say you, "[as] in my XVIth Letter I had occasion to shew, signifi[es] the renewing of the heart by the Holy Ghost."

Really, Sir, I could never, by your statement or pr[ac]-tice, perceive that it signified any thing. This has be[en] sufficiently exposed in my reply to the above Letter. I therefore add only one remark here. You say it "sig-nifies the renewing of the heart by the Holy Ghost." Why then do you apply it to unbelievers as well as to believers? Does it signify the same thing in both? Were a certain *badge* appointed to distinguish a particular of-ficer, and were none allowed to wear it but those of the same rank, it would then be significant of that office: but if every inferior officer, and even privates were indis-criminately to wear it; in that case it would *signify* nothing. The cases are parallel. We never read in the scriptures of baptism being applied to any but believers. Hence anciently it was considered as a badge of a dis-ple of Christ. *Know you not, that so many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ?* Your re-marks on the figurative language of scripture, such as *sprinkling*, and *pouring*, as referring to the operations of the Spirit, I had anticipated and answered. (See Ap-pendix, page 325.)

You add, 5. "The *references* to baptism in the dif-ferent parts of scripture, are clearly in favour of sprin[k]-

ling or affusion." I do not understand the scriptures quoted by you, to refer to baptism; but to something more important. The typical sprinkling, under the law, and the prophecies respecting the Messiah's *sprinkling many nations*, referred not to baptism, but to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This is necessary as a previous qualification for baptism. Agreeably to the Apostle, *Having your* HEARTS SPRINKLED *from an evil conscience, and your* BODIES WASHED *with pure water.**

To what purpose do you quote the prophecy from Ezekiel, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean*, &c.? Do you suppose that sprinkling clean water upon the face of an infant makes it clean? Does this cleanse from moral filthiness, and from idols? If baptism does not produce this effect, then it did not refer to baptism, but to something else.

Again you tell us, that the *divers washings*, or baptisms mentioned Heb. ix. 10. mean the *sprinklings* under the legal economy. By what authority you make this assertion, I know not. I perceive nothing either in the text or context that warrants it; nor do I believe that *diaphorois baptismois*, means *divers sprinklings*, but washings by dipping the whole body.

You next argue from 1 Cor. x. 2. "When passing through the sea, on dry land, the Israelites, we are *assured*, were *sprinkled* with spray from the sea, and *rain* from the cloud which covered them." I am often surprised, Sir, at the *assurance* with which your conclusions are brought forward, without a scrap of evidence to support them. Did you observe that the Apostle does not say they were baptized *from* the cloud, and *from* the sea, but IN them? But "we are assured they were sprinkled," say you. Moses gives no intimations of the waves dashing so as to cause a *spray*, but naturally leads us to conclude it was calm, and that *the waters were a wall to them on the right hand and on the left*. But your fancy respecting the cloud is still more singular. It was in the night season, probably about midnight, when the camp of Israel took up their march. At this moment, the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind

* Heb. x. 22.

them. *And it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel: and it was a cloud and darkness* to the Egyptians, *but it gave light by night* to the people of Israel. The cloud was not *over* the host, as you represent, in order to support your argument, but *behind* them. Besides, it was the bright side, resembling a *pillar of fire*, that was towards the Israelites. The whole representation, as given by Moses, absolutely forbids the supposition, that a drop of water should distil from that cloud upon the people. The passage you have cited from the sixty-eighth Psalm, as proof that it rained from the *pillar of fire*,* refers decidedly to another event, as will appear by quoting the passage entire: "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.* Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary."† By leaving out that part of the text which I have put in italics, you have concealed from your readers the true meaning of the passage. "Is not this, Sir, getting along miserably?" But should we even admit, what is not at all probable, that this *plenteous rain* fell at the time of the passage through the Red Sea, is it not much more rational to suppose it fell upon the Egyptians, than on the Hebrews, particularly as the *dark side of the cloud* was towards them? Fall where it might, was it after all only a sprinkling? We should suppose a *plenteous rain* poured down upon a people, would bear no very faint analogy to an immersion. But, Sir, I freely acknowledge, that I do not believe that any water touched them, either from the cloud or from the sea, but that the language is used figuratively, as of Christ's sufferings. Your application of the above passage furnishes a specimen of the singular felicity you possess of adapting scripture to your purpose. You here lead us, by your supposition, to contemplate an immense army of more than half a million of men, women and children, in the dead of night, going down into the heart of the sea, in order to escape a pursuing foe. And while marching with tremulous steps along the dread way, between the stiffened waves, it would seem, that this

* Neh. ix. 12. † Psal. lxviii. 8, 9.

directing *cloud* which before had enlightened their path, is all on a sudden turned to Egyptian darkness! "the earth shook! the heavens also dropped at the presence of God!" Yea, more: *He sent a* PLENTIFUL RAIN *to confirm his inheritance, when it was weary!* Can it be thought that a *plenteous rain*, at such a time, and under such circumstances, would have been considered as a *confirming token* of God's love to his people? It is difficult to conceive of any thing that could have rendered their situation more distressing.

You proceed to remark upon Christ's *sufferings*, which are called a baptism. In answer to which, I will only submit to your consideration Doctor Campbell's translation of the passage: "I have an IMMERSION to undergo; and how am I pained till it be accomplished!"* If it requires a greater quantity of water to plunge a person in, than it does to sprinkle him, we should suppose it would convey a much more forcible idea of his sufferings to say, that he was *plunged* in them, than to say, that he had a sprinkling of them.

With regard to the "wonderful effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost," I see nothing which looks like *sprinkling*. Christ, in directing his disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, by which he meant the baptism of the Holy Ghost, referred them to John's baptism, which was evidently an immersion. Indeed it has much more the appearance of this than of *sprinkling*. The *mighty rushing wind from heaven*, was as really a manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost, as any thing else. *And this filled all the house where they were sitting. And* THEY *were all* FILLED *with the Holy Ghost.* There is no more difficulty in conceiving of their being *immersed* in this divine influence, than of their being *sprinkled* with it. The language in either case must be understood figuratively.

I have now, Sir, considered the whole of your evidence in favour of sprinkling; but can see no solid proof. To what purpose, we would ask, is all this circumstantial evidence produced, while, at the same time, you must certainly know, and it would be an imposition upon your

* Translation of Luke xii. 50.

readers to attempt to conceal it, that *immersion* was uni-
versally practised in the whole Christian church for mo-
than twelve hundred years after the Apostles, excepti-
in cases where the person was thought unable to bear i-
You also know that Dr. Wall, whom you so implicitl-
follow in other cases, endeavoured to restore this apo-
tolic practice, as the most effectual way to still the com-
plaints of the Antipædobaptists. He also has told yo-
if you will believe him, how the change was made, fro-
immersion to sprinkling. "Calvin," saith he, "wa-
I think, (as I said in my book) the first in the wor-
that drew up a Form of Liturgy that prescribed *pouri-
water* on the infant, absolutely, without saying any thi-
of dipping."* This, Sir, is a fact that no Pædobapti-
to my knowledge, has ever presumed to controvert. W-
also know, and we suppose you know, Calvin's reaso-
for making this change. Lest you should have forgo-
ten them, I will refresh your memory by placing the-
before you. In his commentary on Acts viii. 38. h-
remarks; "*They went down into the water.* Here we
see the rite vsed among the men of old time in baptisme
for they put all the bodie into the water; now the v-
is this, that the minister doth only sprinkle the bodie
the head." After several remarks upon the use of the ord-
nance, he adds, "It is certain that wee want nothing whi-
maketh to the substance of baptisme. Wherefore th-
churche did graunt libertie to herselfe *since the beginnin-*
to change the rites somewhat excepting this substance. F-
some dipped them thrise, some but once: wherefore thes-
is no cause why wee should bee so strait laced in ma-
ters which are of no suche weight: so that that exte-
nall pompe doe no whit pollute the simple institution
Christe."†

Here, Sir, this zealous reformer tells you what was th-
ancient mode of baptism, and on what ground it w-
changed. He had not the hardihood to pretend, th-
sprinkling was the *ancient mode*; but says, that "th-
church had granted liberty to herself, *since the beginning*
to change the rites somewhat." Was Calvin a blockhead

* Wall's Defence, p. 146. †. Calvin in loc. Lond. ed. 158-

Did he assert a falsehood, which went to impeach his own practice? Or are you, Sir, labouring to defend what the universal language of history declares to be untrue?

Dr. Wall further says, "It was his admirers in England, who, in Queen Elizabeth's time, brought *pouring* into ordinary use, which before was only used to weak children. But the succeeding *Presbyterians* in England, about the year 1644, *went* FARTHER YET *from the* ANCIENT *way*, and, instead of *pouring*, brought into use in many places *sprinkling*."* Can you read these remarks from Calvin and Dr. Wall, and compare them with your arguments against immersion, and not feel your cheek warm? The concessions produced in this Letter from Calvin, Witsius, Salmasius, and Wall, in favour of immersion, must, to an unprejudiced mind, "form an argument of tenfold greater weight," than any thing which has ever yet been brought in favour of sprinkling. Your charges against us for using *scripture phrases*, which you call "dubious," such as "*into*, and *out of* the water, and *buried with him in baptism*, on which, for a sectarian charm," you tell us, "such perpetual changes are rung," we leave to your own reflections.

Respectfully your's, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just finished perusing your XXIII[d] Letter; and am sorry to say, that I perceive more of an acrimonious spirit in it than in most of the preceding, notwithstanding the seeming candour with which it is commenced. Your principal object in this, is to support the charges you brought against the Baptists in your Two Discourses, and to explain away the force of my remarks upon them.

"Though nothing," say you, "was further from my heart, than a *design* to calumniate the Antipædobaptists;

* Def. p. 146.

yet I thought it my duty to give, in my Discourses, a faithful representation of some of their errors and irregularities." If you had no design to calumniate, it must be admitted, that you possess a very singular faculty of doing a thing effectually without "designing" it.*

You next complain of me, that I have publicly denounced your "*serious* representations, as bitter 'invectives,' and the effusions of a persecuting spirit." I am totally at a loss to conceive how you can justify this statement to your own conscience. I do not recollect to have used the word 'invective' throughout the whole section on which your animadversions in this Letter are founded. And yet, Sir, you have brought it forward, as though I had used it in application to every article of charge. After stating what I noticed as a 'second charge,' you remark: "This very *serious* representation, is what you are pleased to call my second "*invective*." No, Sir; I did not use the term *invective*. I called it 'another charge,' and nothing more. You have continued the same method in almost every article. Such as my "third *invective*," my "fourth *invective*," &c. With regard to my complaining of a "persecuting spirit," I shall have occasion to notice in another place.

You proceed to state and vindicate the several articles of charge which you brought against us in your Discourses, and of which I complained; but have cautiously kept out of sight my arguments by which I repelled them. Your attempts to vindicate these charges shall now be attended to and answered.

1. Your arguments to prove, that the Baptists deny "God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace," "The church of God formed in Abraham's family," &c. are as unfounded in my view, as though you had asserted,

* We have a fair specimen of this in your Note, (p. 69 of your Disc.) in which you were pleased to say, "It has been a very common thing with the Antipædobaptists to speak very disrespectfully of learning and learned men. *But of late, one can hardly meet with an Antipædobaptist, who is not prepared to talk so fluently and* SO LEARNEDLY *of the meaning of Greek* and *Latin words*, as almost to AMAZE ONE." Had you, Sir, any design in all this? Your ungenerous remarks upon the State of Rhode-Island, in the Letter before me, seem to be made in the same spirit; but as you inform us "without any *intention* to reproach."

that we denied, that the Jewish commonwealth had any legal constitution, because they had none similar to that of the United States. We have told you before, and repeat it again, that we acknowledge both in the sense which the writers of the New Testament acknowledge them; but do not, and cannot subscribe to your deductions from that covenant. You refer your readers to the third section of my Appendix for proof, that we "deny the church of God formed in Abraham's family." I most heartily wish they may read it, and read it with candour and seriousness. I have no apprehension, Sir, that a "serious man, and a friend to the ancient Zion of the Holy One of Israel," would have "his feelings shocked," or "his heart distressed," unless his partialities to the Jewish church had blinded him to the superior glory and beauty of the gospel church.*

What I numbered as your fourth charge against us, stands in the following words: "The grand provision, which, in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make, for the preservation of a righteous seed upon the earth———they not only deny, but openly contemn." As I considered this totally unfounded, I attempted no other reply, than an 'appeal to facts and to the feelings of our fellow men,' with whom we were conversant. "But what is all this, Sir, to the purpose?" you reply. Do you not after all utterly deny, and openly contemn, that provision, which, in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make *(by connecting children with their parents in his everlasting covenant,)* for the preservation of a righteous seed upon the earth?" We do not deny, Sir, that "God has made provision for the preservation of a righteous seed upon the earth," and for the "maintenance of his cause from age to age;" but we deny the correctness of your statement, that this provision is confined to the seed of believers. If this *gracious provision* embraces only the seed of believers, then no others will ever be converted or saved! No one will be so absurd as to suppose, that God will ever save any, for whose salvation he has not provided. Hence too, all attempts to spread the gospel among the

* Vid. 2 Cor. iii.

heathens would be useless and unavailing, as they a not the seed of believers. After all, Sir, you have be obliged to acknowledge in another place, that God, his sovereign pleasure, often leaves the children of belie ers, and calls others whose parents were never ma subjects of renewing grace. If this provision does n secure the salvation of the seed of believers, certainly a generally, what does it do? Would you dare, in view this "gracious provision," to assert, that a single child a believer that is now in unbelief will ever infallibly saved? I think, Sir, you would hesitate. If so; and is certain that God often does take others who are n the seed of believers; then it amounts to this, and more, that he *has mercy on whom he will have mercy*, a whom he will he permits to harden themselves in sin their own ruin.

Your predilection for your favourite plan appears, Si to have carried you quite aside from the Bible accoun The prophet Isaiah, in view of the conversion of th Gentiles, declared, that *more are the children of the d elate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.* When the Jews "*contradicted and blasphemed, then Paul a Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the wo of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye p it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting lif lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord comman ed us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentile that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth.*" Not to the seed of believers only, or in any exclusiv or special sense, but to the *ends of the earth.* St. Pa was so far from thinking that converts were principall to be made from among the children of professors, th he nobly *strived to preach the gospel where Christ had n been named, lest he should build upon another man's foundatio*

Your statements, Sir, are so extraordinary, that I a almost astonished while I examine them. "Is it not fact," you ask, "too plain to be contested, that since th Gentiles first became fellow-heirs, and of the same bod and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel;— *piety and all the blessings of the covenant have been* TRAN

* Chap. liv. 1. † Acts xiii. 46.

MITTED *from parents to children*, from generation to generation; and that in this way, principally, the cause and church of God have been maintained and perpetuated?" According to this, children inherit and hold their "piety and all the blessing of the covenant," by the same tenure which they hold their lands. I confess, Sir, I never knew until now, that *piety* was *transmissible*. Alas! to what lengths you seem determined to go, rather than give up a favourite point!

You proceed to say, "It is, I believe, a generally acknowledged fact, that by far the *better part* of the members of your churches are persons who had Pædobaptist parents, and were baptized in their infancy." If this be a "fact," it is one which I never heard named before. "By far the *better part* of the members of your churches," say you, "had Pædobaptist parents, and were baptzed in their infancy." I believe I may say with *equal modesty*, that we have many members in our churches who neither descended from Pædobaptist parents, nor were baptized in infancy, who would do honour to any church; yea, such as would have done honour to the *apostolic church*; and if those who have been sprinkled in infancy are "far better," we have much reason to congratulate ourselves. I acknowledge, Sir, *this confident boasting* may appear foolish; but must say with the Apostle, you have in a sense *compelled me*.*

I am sorry, Sir, to have occasion to notice in this same paragraph another ungenerous, unfounded insinuation. You are pleased to suggest (and you have often done it) that these "better" members who had been baptized in infancy, "have, by some means, been prevailed on ungratefully to disavow that very covenant, and to contemn the gracious provision made in it for their children." I must here, Sir, be permitted to enter my solemn protest against such unchristian insinuations. It would, I am persuaded, be an unedifying subject to attempt to prove, which party makes the greatest exertions to proselyte; but I have no apprehension, that the Baptists would suffer by the comparison. We know the conduct of your denomination in this respect, probably as well as you know our's.

* 2 Cor. xi. 17. & xii. 11.

In proof of the foregoing positions, you add, "God will be faithful to his covenant, and bless his own institutions, notwithstanding the contempt with which they are treated." Really, Sir, you seem to have come quite about: I should suppose you to be almost as much of a Predestinarian as I am. Have you forgotten the length to which you carried your argument in your XIXth Letter, that even the whole plan of redemption would have been frustrated, if Abraham had been disobedient to the divine command? and that the Messiah, in that case, would not have come into the world; nor the nations been blessed in him.* It is always pleasant, Sir, to see a man consistent with himself. But you proceed to add, "it is in the neighbourhood of Pædobaptist churches that your churches flourish." This is partly true; for we have few any where else. And you may be assured, Sir, that all your kind offices in *designedly* assisting to build up our churches, are duly appreciated. "You are built up," you continue, "with proselytes from the Pædobaptist faith, and your *best members are gained over* from Pædobaptist connexions." Few of our members, comparatively, were ever professors until they made their engagements with us. But we have no doubt but those who do come from your churches are generally some of the most *pious* and *conscientious* of your members, whether they are our best or not. You add, "and I can candidly declare it as my serious belief, that without Pædobaptists you could not subsist." Do you remember, Sir, in the course of your reading, to have seen an account of Roger Williams?——The remainder is left to your own reflections.

In order to prove that our "churches would decay and eventually become extinct," if it were not for the Pædobaptists; and that we have no right to expect that the gospel will be attended with much success where the "sacred dedication of children is neglected,"† you bring forward Rhode-Island as an example.

* Vid. Lett. p. 99.

† The Author of the Letters connects with "sacred dedication," *holy nurture*; but he has no right to say, nor is it true, that the Baptists neglect this duty to their children.

It is, I confess, with extreme reluctance, that I enter upon this unpleasant subject; but I could not justify myself to that injured State, nor to the public, were I to pass it over in silence. I am apprehensive, Sir, that neither your declaration, that your "queries" were made "without any intention to reproach," nor your throwing yourself frankly upon the candour of all concerned," after making your invidious remarks, will be sufficient to screen you from that censure, which such an unprovoked attack upon public reputation demands. My limits forbid my going into an elaborate examination of the subject.

You commence your philippic by asking, "Was not the State of Rhode Island originally settled on Antipædobaptist principles?" We answer, The first settlers were undoubtedly Baptists; some of whom had been banished from this then Colony, on account of their religious opinions, and forbid to return, on pain of death!

Alas! Sir, what had become of WILLIAMS, if *Myantinomo* and *Canonicus** had treated him with as little compassion as his erring brethren had done?

Again you ask, "Have not those principles there been left to their free and uncontrolled operation and influence?" We answer, They have; but no more so, than all other religious opinions: for it must be acknowledged to the everlasting honour of Rhode-Island, that no person has ever been imprisoned or persecuted in that State on account of his religious opinions. Agreeably to the sentiments of its original founder, religious liberty has there been enjoyed in its fullest extent. From this circumstance alone, it was easy to have foreseen, that dissenters of different sects would resort there for asylum. The laws of that State protect every man who demeans himself quietly, whether he has religion or not. And although the Baptists may be the largest denomination, it is not certain to my mind, that they are larger than all others. But even if they were, as Christians they claim no jurisdiction beyond the limits of their particular churches.

Having noticed your premises, we proceed to examine your conclusion. "If then," say you, "the principles

* Two Sachems.

of Antipædobaptism were true and scriptural; might w
not look to Rhode-Island for a more general prevalen
of divine knowledge, a more general and sacred obse
vance of divine institutions, more pure and flourishin
churches, and more of the spirit of primitive Christianit
than is to be expected in almost any other part of th
globe?" Is this, Sir, a candid statement? Are these in
ferences just? If so, they will apply to others besid
the Baptists. Do not the Congregationalists also enjo
the "free and uncontrolled exercise of their religiou
principles." It cannot be denied. Why may you ne
then expect the same things from them in proof of you
sentiments, which you require of the Baptists? I hav
seen, however, no evidence as yet, that the Baptists o
Rhode-Island do not as conscientiously observe the d
vine institutions, (as they understand them,) as any othe
Christians. And I believe their churches are as *pure i*
doctrine and discipline as many others which, by means o
worldly power, appear flourishing.

You proceed to ask, "But what is the actual result o
this experiment?" "Alas!" you exclaim, "let the for
saken, decayed houses of God,——let the profaned, an
unacknowledged day of the Lord,—let the unread, an
even exiled oracles of divine truth,——let the neglecte
and despised ordinances of religion,——let the dear chi
dren and youth, growing up in the most deplorable ig
norance of God, his word, his sacred institutions,——l
the *few* friends of Zion, weeping in secret places, over he
desert, her affecting and wide-spread *desert* around them
——let the deeply-impressed missionaries, who, in obe
dience to the most urgent calls, have been sent by Pædo
baptist societies into different parts of the State——b
allowed to testify! *If there be religion there*, is it not a
most wholly confined to those places in which Pædobap
tist churches are established, and a *Pædobaptist influen*
has effect? Witness the late revivals!"

I have thought proper, Sir, to present your very a
fecting picture entire: and had I no acquaintance wit
the State of Rhode-Island, or no more than I imagin
the writer of the above paragraph has, I might possibl
believe the representation to be just. But from what

know, I am obliged to consider it as a very incorrect, injudicious statement, calculated to produce an opinion highly injurious to the respectability of the State, as well as to the Baptists.

You first call to "the forsaken decayed houses of God" to testify. I have no doubt but some of your readers have been led from your representation to conclude, that the Baptists had not a respectable meeting-house in the State. If they ever had any such, that they were now "forsaken, and falling into decay." Whereas, it is a fact, that they have many decent houses where the worship of God is regularly attended; and we may add, they have one, at least, which surpasses in size and elegance almost any in the New-England States.

A part of this small State is thinly settled, owing chiefly to its natural roughness, and to the sterility of the soil. Here I should imagine, those houses are to be seen, which some traveller passing along happened to espy, and furnished the outlines for your picture. However this may be, there can be no manner of doubt, were the Baptists in every town where they have a decided majority, to *tax all the Pædobaptists*, to help them build and repair their houses for public worship, they might soon present a more respectable appearance. You add,

"Let the profaned, unacknowledged day of the Lord" testify. There is no dispute, but there are numbers in the State, *who esteem every day alike.* A considerable portion of the people are of the denomination called *Friends.* As to any personal knowledge, I can only say, I have spent two Lord's days in different towns in the State, and can sincerely declare, I never witnessed more good order and decorum in any places wherever I attended public worship. Three services were attended each day, and I do not recollect to have observed (in going or returning) either work or diversion.

Should it be said, that in some parts of the State it is very different; that there are neither meeting-houses nor public worship: let it be granted. And do you suppose this is because the people are Baptists? No, Sir, it is because they are not. They may indeed think more favourably of that denomination, than of any other; but

if they were real Baptists, they would not *neglect the assembling themselves together as the manner of some is.* You cannot be insensible, Sir, that we are constantly accused by your denomination, of spending too much time in going to meeting. Our week-day lectures and *evening meetings*, are quite proverbial.

But, Sir, were a serious Baptist from Rhode-Island to visit the metropolis of Massachusetts, "the head-quarters of good principles," would he not be led, from your observations, to suppose that no person would be seen in the streets on Lord's day, unless going or returning from church or meeting? But while he could scarcely credit his senses, would he not be ready to ask, *What meaneth this prancing of the horses, and this rattling of the carriage-wheels in mine ears?* And should he be informed, that more horses and carriages of every kind were let to visiting and other parties of pleasure on that day than on any other in the week, what would be his astonishment? What would he think of the "influence of Pædobaptist principles?" would he not suppose there were some besides the ancient Pharisees who could *strain at a gnat and swallow a camel?*

The "*unread* and even *exiled* oracles of truth," are next invoked to bear their testimony against the Baptists of Rhode-Island. By this description one would suppose, that they had treated the Bible much as the founder of their State had formerly been treated. But I presume, after all, comparatively few families could be found in that State which have not a Bible. That this precious book is too much neglected every where, no one will deny.

"Let the neglected and despised ordinances of religion" speak. That the ordinances as they *were first delivered to the saints*, are too much neglected, and too often despised and ridiculed by unthinking wicked men, is lamentably true. But, Sir, did you ever know the Baptists of Rhode-Island, to carry their opposition so far, as while one of your ministers was engaged in administering the solemn ordinance of baptism, they should even dare in derision to *baptize a dog?** Or did you ever know them

* See an account of a baptism in the county of Middlesex. *Backus' Hist.*

to collect near the scene of administration, and discharge a number of cannon, with other indecent expressions of derision and contempt ?* It is truly painful to be called in this way to repel your ungenerous reproaches, cast upon an unoffending people.

"The dear children and youth growing up in the most deplorable ignorance of God, his word, his sacred institutions," are next called as witnesses against the Baptists. To this I will only say, so far as they neglect their children, they deserve the reproof, and I sincerely hope they may profit by it. But it seems rather uncandid to charge all the ignorance in the State, of all denominations, and even of the *Nothingarians* (as Dr. Morse calls a considerable number of the people) to the account of the Antipædobaptists.†

* If Mr. Worcester should be disposed to inquire into the truth of the last mentioned circumstance, he need not go out of the county of Essex to ascertain it.

† Dr. Parish, in his "New System of Modern Geography," tells us, that "many of the people of Rhode-Island can neither write nor read." It is said, however, by the best informed gentlemen of that State, that this is not correct. That there are a few of this description is admitted; this is undoubtedly true of some in most if not all the other States.

This writer further informs us, that the literature of the State is chiefly confined to Newport and Providence. In the latter, he says, "is Brown's College," [Brown University] "and at Newport is a flourishing Academy." In noticing the public buildings in Providence, he mentions a "Baptist-meeting house, with a lofty and elegant spire,—*three* Congregational meeting-houses," &c. How the Doctor happened to overlook a second Baptist meeting-house, particularly as it is within a few rods of one of the others, we know not. It is a truth, however, that there is a neat, well-finished house, in which a respectable church and society have statedly enjoyed the word and ordinances for several years past. It is thought, that Mr. Worcester might profit by the information, if Dr. Parish, in his next edition, would let the public know, whether it were a "Pædobaptist," or an Antipædobaptist "influence," which assisted the aged and venerable Mr. Snow, and his *few* friends, to build what is now considered as the third Congregational meeting-house! A hint to the wise is sufficient.

In closing his remarks on the public buildings in the respectable town of Providence, Dr. P. notices a "work-house, *school-house*," &c. By this account, no man would suppose that there was more than one school-house in the town. Whereas there are five public schools, a grammar-school, connected with the University; besides a number of private schools. We may also add, there is a respectable Episcopal church (now rebuilding) a meeting-house for Friends, &c.

In noticing the town of Warren, Dr. Parish says, Here are a social library, a bank, an insurance-office, an *academy*, a printing-office, four

"Let the deeply-impressed missionaries, who, in obedience to the most urgent calls, have been sent by Pædobaptist societies—be allowed to testify!" It is natural here to ask, From whom did your societies receive these "urgent calls?" We should presume not from the Baptists; for they are said not to be very partial to your preachers. And that *your* denomination should be in such deplorable circumstances, is hardly to be accounted for. We are happy, however, to learn, that your missionaries were permitted to preach, when and where they pleased, without molestation or injury, and to return in safety again to their families. How very different, Sir, is this treatment from that experienced by Messrs. *Clark* and *Holmes*, when making a visit to some of their brethren in this State, who, while engaged in preaching, were arrested, and poor Holmes committed to prison; and not long after publickly whipt in a very inhuman manner!—But I forbear.

You close your description by asking, "If there be religion there, is it not almost wholly confined to those places where Pædobaptist churches are established, and a Pædobaptist influence has effect?" It would seem by this, as though a "Pædobaptist influence" is as necessary to the existence of religion, as the divine influences of the Spirit. Alas! Sir, is it not to be feared, that there is much that passes under the name of religion, which has nothing better for its support than this kind of *influence*?

"The late revivals," which you call to "witness," give a greatly preponderating evidence in favour of the Baptists. If the recollection of the past errors of your denomination in persecuting the Baptists should be painful, you must place the blame wholly to your own ac-

grammar schools, a hall for Free-Masons, and two houses for public worship." This is certainly a very flattering account of this pleasant village; and especially as the Pædobaptists never had any particular "influence" here. We should certainly hope, that the inhabitants of Warren, can "*write* and *read*" too, seeing they support, according to Dr. P. a "social library, an academy, and four grammar-schools." How wonderful it is, that all this should come to pass, and no other church in the town excepting the Baptists! until within a few years past a small Methodist society has been established there.

count, in having obliged us, in *self*-defence, to bring them again to public view.

Having finished your note upon Rhode-Island, you again resume your subject; but your feelings appear to be wrought up to a tone more suited to declamation than argument. Hence, in a most impassioned address, you ask, "Shall children, then, and young persons, be *taught* and *persuaded*, to despise the holy covenant and ordinance of the living God?" &c. In this short paragraph, you repeat the words "*taught* and *persuaded*" no less than four times over; and then, as if these were not sufficiently emphatical, you ask, "shall children thus given up, be *seductively* torn away from those churches which witnessed the solemn vows made for them, and bore a part in the tender and holy solemnities?"

It is hardly possible, Sir, to conceive of a representation more distant from the truth, and consequently of one more injurious to the characters of those whom it is designed to criminate. Is it consistent with the character of an upright Christian, or even of a gentleman, to continue, *without proof*, an insinuation against an opponent, which he has been challenged, in the most solemn manner, to prove?* And offer no other reason for its continuance only that he "verily believes it true?" How long must we be thus slanderously charged with "persuading" and "seductively tearing away" from your churches the children whom you have baptized in their infancy, without their knowledge or consent, merely because they conscientiously dissent from you? No, Sir, be assured, we neither *persuade* nor *seduce* them; they come to us as volunteers. And we know, and we believe that you know, that many more would come if they were not *unreasonably* hindered. We therefore *again* call upon you or any, or all your brethren, to furnish proof of a single instance, where a man, woman or child have been baptized by any minister of our associated churches, but by their choice and consent. And for every such instance we pledge ourselves to bring two for one, where persons, after having voluntarily offered themselves to join with us, have been not only persuaded, but abso-

* App. p. 298.

lutely hindered from coming.—"And shall all this" cru opposition, at once so inconsistent with the rights of con science, and with that voluntary service which God re quires, "be done under the imposing pretence of doin God service?"

You proceed next to what I considered as your '5t charge against the Baptists.' "They deny," say yo "and contemn the grace so kindly offered for the spi itual renovation, and everlasting salvation, of the seed the church." I shall here notice but one thing in you defence of this article. After attempting to show th advantages which your children have over the childre of the Baptists, you commence your fourth paragraph follows: "Yes, Sir, *we* of the *Pædobaptist faith*, if tru and faithful, *indeed may* present our supplications for o children, upon a *different footing* from what the Baptis do."

I consider this sentiment both incorrect and dangerou Incorrect, because the gospel appears not to warrant suc a distinction, but to support exactly the contrary. Da gerous, because calculated to lead baptized children think more highly of themselves than they ought think. If blessings are to be pleaded for our childre on the ground of God's promise to us as believers, the the Baptists have the same ground to plead for the children as others have: for I suppose it will not be d nied that they are believers, and that their children a the *seed* of believers. If this be not the "footing" o which you would found a plea in behalf of your ch dren, then it must be, we conceive, because they ha been dedicated by baptism: in this case, a Pædobapt believer would have no more right to plead for his chil if it were going out of the world unbaptized, than a Ba tist would for his.

The following scriptures show the sentiment to be i *correct*. "Think not to say within yourselves, we ha Abraham to our father." "*And now also the ax is la to the root of the trees; and* EVERY *tree*, (whatever stoc it might spring from,) *which bringeth not forth good fru is hewn down and cast into the fire.*" "He that *believe* and is *baptized*, shall be saved; and he that believe

not, shall be damned." "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all under sin.*" "God now commandeth *all men* every where to repent."

Is there not danger, Sir, of flattering the vanity, and strengthening the prejudices of your children, by leading them to imagine that they are a great deal better than their Baptist neighbours, although their lives may be equally as irreligious and vain?* It is matter of grateful adoration to every true believer, that "*it is not by works of righteousness which he has done*, or which his parents did for him, *but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"

In this connexion you ask, in a *note*, "Are you willing, Sir, to leave yourself in this way?" that is, to the "uncovenanted mercy of God." I consider every believer to be interested in the blessings of the *new covenant*; but I know of no covenant engagements between God and unbelievers. We do not feel condemned, for not practising as a *duty*, what we do not find to be *commanded*; nor can we distrust the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, in withholding the blessings we ask, merely because he is not *bound by promise.* This appears to be the sum of your argument from infant baptism.

6. "The great body of God's visible professing people, *even the most enlightened and the most faithful*, for hundreds of years, they utterly set aside, as constituting no part of the true church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist."

This paragraph I considered as totally unfounded. It was alleged that 'if any thing could be produced from the writings of an individual which might seem to bear hard upon the visibility of the Pædobaptist churches, this alone would not prove it to be the general sentiment of the denomination.' In support of the correctness of this statement, I appealed to the 'writings of the Baptists from time immemorial.' I thought proper further to de-

* I have been credibly informed, that the pastor of a Pædobaptist church on Deer-Isle, lately, when catechising the children of his parish, proceeded actually to separate them, and set the baptized children *on his right hand*, and the unbaptized *on his left!* Deplorable indeed would be the condition of unbaptized children, if their final destiny depended on the decisions of such a bigoted judge.

clare, that 'as far as I had been able to understand the sentiments of our denomination, both in Europe and America, they had never denied, that Pædobaptists were visible Christians; that a number of them united together, might be considered as a visible church, and that a minister regularly placed over them might be a visible minister of Christ.' To this you reply, "Probably, Sir, no declaration in your whole book has more surprised and astonished your readers, both Pædobaptists and Antipædobaptists, than this." I can assure you, Sir, I have never heard of the least alarm excited among the Baptists in consequence of it; nor can I see why it should be a subject of astonishment to Pædobaptists. The sentiment I still believe to be correct, and am under no apprehension of having committed myself. I stated explicitly, how far I considered their visibility to be defective. That we maintain that Pædobaptists constitute "no part of the church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist," you persist in saying, "I do seriously believe." You further add, "I should no more think of being called upon to produce proof of this, than of their (the Baptists) holding close communion." In order to shew, that it is a matter of public notoriety, you proceed to ask the moderate number of *twenty* questions, which you sum up as follows, "Do you not, in fine, openly and before the world, call us 'Judaizers,' and a part of "*Antichrist?*" But can you do this, and yet acknowledge us to be churches of Christ? The first of these expressions, you profess to have quoted from my book, with what degree of fairness will be seen by recurring to the passage, which is as follows; 'Whether such an attempt' (to blend the Jewish and Christian churches together) 'does not *resemble* the conduct of those judaizing teachers, whom St. Paul, in his epistles, &c. so severely reprehended, ought to be seriously considered. To some it has this aspect.' This, Sir, is your proof from my book, that I have unchurched all your churches, and turned them over to Antichrist!

With regard to the latter, as I have no where called your churches "a part of Antichrist," nor attempted to vindicate this idea in any that have, I refer it to you, Sir, whether it is generous to reproach me with it.

Your questions do not appear to me so confounding, as I imagine you thought they would. I should esteem it an easy task to answer them all, did I not deem it a waste of time to do it. I will, however, briefly notice a few of them.

"Do you not—utterly separate yourselves from our sacred communion?" And what if we do? Did not the Protestant Dissenters treat the church of England in the same manner? But did they mean by this to say, that the "most enlightened and most faithful" among them made no part of the church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist? If it be not lawful to separate from a visible church until we are certain that the best of them make no part of the church of Christ, I think we shall find it difficult to justify a single separation, from the days of the Apostles to the present time. "Do you not hold yourselves at liberty indiscriminately to *enter our inclosures and* SEIZE *upon our labour*,—upon things made ready to your hands," &c. One would be ready to suppose by this, that the Baptists were a kind of religious banditti; who, by force and violence, carried off your members. But you may be assured, Sir, we neither "seize upon your labours," nor profit by them, but in compliance with the wishes of those on whom you have bestowed them. You further ask, "When any of our members are by *any means prevailed on* to go over to you, do you not immediately receive them without any respect to their covenant engagements, to their church standing, or to the feelings, or privileges, either of their ministers or their brethren?" I believe, Sir, some of our brethren treat the matter much in this way; and they do it upon this principle, that it is utterly unavailing to ask your churches to dismiss them, as they have almost universally refused it. But, Sir, do not your churches do the same? Whenever a member has gone over to you from us, have you treated the subject with any more delicacy? I leave the answer to your own conscience. Had your churches acted the friendly part, and dismissed such members as conscientiously dissented from them, it would have altered our procedure towards you.

With regard to myself, I can, with much pleasure, assure you, that it has been my uniform practice from the

commencement of my ministry, to treat the subject entirely different from your representation. Many of my brethren agree with me in sentiment and practice on this point.

In proof that we hold your churches to be a part of Antichrist, you proceed to ask, "Was there a church of Christ at Sedgwick before the late revolution in that place?" It gives me pleasure, Sir, to answer you. I presume that few if any of the Baptists will deny, that there had been a Pædobaptist church in that place, which had solemnly covenanted to take the *holy scriptures* as their *only rule of faith* and *practice*.* In searching these scriptures, and in hearing them explained, they were led to understand them differently from what they once did. "Accordingly, at a meeting of the church (or covenanted brethren) February 28, 1805, they voted unanimously to send for a council of Baptist ministers to come and assist them in the following particulars; viz. To administer Christian baptism to them; to constitute them into a church upon the primitive Baptist platform; to set over them in the Lord the Rev. Daniel Merrill, to be their minister." The question here, Sir, is fairly this; *Has the majority of a church, upon due conviction, a right to change their religious sentiments?* If they have not, then these brethren undoubtedly did wrong, and we were wrong in assisting them. But to allow this, will implicate all dissenters, from the days of Luther to the present time.

But, Sir, I wish to ask candidly, What ought to have been done in the above case? These brethren could not, without violating their consciences, continue in the practice of Pædobaptism. They were fully convinced that the New Testament required them to be baptized after believing, or on a profession of their faith; and that baptism was nothing less than an immersion of the whole body in water. Allowing these, Sir, to have been their real sentiments, could you have continued your fellowship to them as a sister church, and as loyal subjects of our common Lord, merely because they did not put in practice what they verily believed to be the will of Christ?

* Vid. the Covenant and Articles on which the church first embodied.

Unless you will undertake to say they did not act conscientiously, I presume your answer would justify the proceedings at Sedgwick.

Should you ask again, "But was there an acknowledged church of Christ at Sedgwick, or was there not?" I will candidly answer, There had been an "acknowledged church" before they changed their sentiments; but when they had come to a solemn pause, and had openly confessed that they could find no evidence in the Bible to support the practice of infant baptism, and therefore could no longer practise it; but, as believers, felt the necessity of being themselves baptized; I will refer it to you, Sir, to determine, whether, in these circumstances, you would *acknowledge* them to be a Pædobaptist church?

There might have been a Pædobaptist church in Sedgwick at the time, for ought I know, but we neither saw nor heard of any.

On the whole, it appears peculiarly unfortunate for your argument, that you should fix upon the proceedings at Sedgwick, to prove that we deny the visibility of your churches, or that we consider you as making only a part of Antichrist. If all your churches were in the situation of that, they would not long be visible. But, Sir, your *note*, as I pass along, requires a moment's attention. My former remark, "That you seemed to be much disturbed at the proceedings of the Baptists at Sedgwick," will not be disputed I believe by any one who reads the following paragraph in your note.

"Though," say you, "I certainly considered your EXULTING *publication* of the Sedgwick revolution, as a piece of the *same system* of *proselytism*, of which your *parade*, of meetings and baptisms, your UNBOUNDED BLAZONING of your preachers and performances, your PERPETUAL PROCLAMATIONS of success and increase, and a hundred things of a similar nature, are parts," &c. To this uncandid strain of "invective," I would only say, If your cause requires such management in its support, it argues that it is in a declining state.

But, Sir, you have one remark on the revolution at Sedgwick, which must be considered *prophetic*. "SEDGWICK WILL NOT LONG BE TO YOU A VERY PLEASANT

sound." We confess, that we are wholly in the dar with respect to this mysterious denunciation. We ar not insensible, that uncommon exertions have been mad by some of your brethren, in order to effect a counte revolution: but their success has hitherto been so lim ited, as not to occasion any serious alarm. What chang es may take place in that, or any other church in futur is only known to Him who *seeth the end from the beginning* Hitherto, we perceive nothing in the recollection o Sedgwick, that is disagreeable.

But, Sir, you seem, if possible, more disturbed, by m remarks upon the piece in the Mass. Mag. signed "*Ly ia.*" That my remarks were severe will not be denied and I certainly thought the occasion fully justified such a mode of treatment. I have ever considered that *piece* as an unmanly, insidious attack upon the reputation o the Baptists; a story fabricated for the sole purpose o increasing the prejudices of the weak and credulous, i order to deter them from attending occasionally on Bap tist preaching.

That I styled the writer of the above *piece*, a "petti coat-priest," is true. The expression, I acknowledge, is somewhat "vulgar;" I will therefore endeavour to ex punge it, should another edition of my book be printed I used it in allusion to Pope *Joan*, who has often been so called.

How far your "serious" remarks, upon the "seriou writer" of that "serious" *piece* signed "Lydia," will hel to identify the author, I shall not pretend to say. I be lieve that no *female* in Salem has ever been suspected o making the communication. Therefore, taking it for granted, that some "serious" brother borrowed the name of "Lydia," with a view to render the affecting story more deeply impressive, I have two objections to enter against such a mode of procedure. In the first place, I consider it highly improper, as it approximates to a vio lation of that sacred injunction, Deut. xxii. 5; "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, *neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so* are *an abomination unto the Lord thy God.*" In the second place, I consider it as an indelible mark of mean

ness. Men never disguise themselves in the attire, or take the names of females, unless they are going to engage in some unlawful, disreputable action, in which they would be ashamed to be known. With these remarks, I take my leave of the "serious" writer. The remainder of this note has been considered in a former Letter.

But to return to the question, Whether we do, or do not acknowledge your churches, you add, "But it is possible, that after all, you should have in this case a *reservation?* Could you mean that you indeed acknowledge us to be churches—but not churches of Christ?" No, Sir, this is a meanness that I never was, and I hope never shall be guilty of. My professions were open and candid. I told you plainly on what ground I could meet you, and where I could walk with you, and where I could not. I therefore aver the sincerity of what I have written,* and appeal to the ministers of your denomination who have been most acquainted with me, whether my treatment of them has not justified my professions.

I now reply to your 7th charge, that the Baptists "place such a stress upon baptism in their mode as to make it the subject on which to display their greatest zeal; thus making people believe, in too many instances, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort, and their eternal salvation."

When I read this charge in your Discourses, I concluded it must have escaped you without due consideration. Knowing its injurious tendency, and that it was totally unfounded, I thought it my duty to repel it in the most pointed manner. After calling upon you by every principle held sacred among men,† to bring forward the proof on which your accusation was founded, I certainly had a right to expect you would either furnish the proof, or give up the charge. But what can I think of the man, who *deliberately* continues the slanderous assertion, with no other proof to support it, than when asked, whether "he can believe the above charge to be true," answers, "Yes, Sir, I can; and declare it too, as solemnly, as if at the bar of our common Judge!" Alas! Sir, where has your

* See p. 290, 333. † App. p. 298.

zeal transported you? Do you think criminality will be fixed at that tribunal to which you refer, by such kind of evidence as this? I should certainly suppose not. But you add, "I am by no means singular in this belief." I imagine not; for I am sensible that unceasing pains have been taken, to impress the sentiment on the minds of the credulous, and no doubt many will believe it, merely from your declaration. And some, we may suppose, will not be very backward in giving currency to a report so well calculated to prejudice people against the Baptists. "Report, say they, and we will report."

As the above charge rests entirely upon your "solemn belief," I assure you I as *solemnly believe* both parts of it to be untrue. I never saw that Baptist preacher yet, whose conduct evinced, that he "placed such stress upon baptism in *any mode*, as to make it the subject on which to display his greatest zeal." Nor do I believe that you can produce a single instance of a person who has been baptized by any of our ministers, who thought, "that going into the water would answer all the purposes of their present comfort, and their future salvation." But, Sir, you will remember your charge is general, against the whole denomination.

You proceed to ask, "Is it possible, Sir, that you should be unapprised of what is so generally known and deplored, that religious revivals of the most hopeful appearances have very often been checked and made to subside, by Antipædobaptists coming in and zealously pressing the subject in *your mode*." This, and the remaining part of this extraordinary statement, which is of the same kind, cannot be admitted as *matter of fact*, notwithstanding your "confident appeal to the best informed ministers and people." I have no doubt, Sir, but from the prejudiced medium through which you have viewed the subject, it has this appearance to you. But we consider it far otherwise.

I think, Sir, I can propose a very easy remedy for the evil of which you complain, admitting it to be real. Let the following line of conduct be pursued by your ministers and people, and I presume you will have but little trouble from the Baptists. In the first place, when a Ba-

tist minister of regular standing comes among you, instead of treating him as a *wolf*, and showing yourself shy, treat him as a Christian brother, by inviting him to your pulpit, and to your house, and attend on his ministry constantly while among your people. In the second place, advise your *own* people not to begin a dispute with him upon the subject of baptism, but to hear him quietly, and profit if they can by his labours, and let him depart in peace. But, Sir, if you think best to pursue a different line of conduct, and sound an alarm the moment a preacher of our denomination comes among you; if your people choose to introduce the subject of baptism; depend upon it we shall feel ourselves justified in vindicating our sentiments.

Let us, for a moment, take another view of the subject. Perhaps there is rarely, if ever, a reformation in our day, when the attention is more closely drawn to religious subjects, but what some are led to question infant baptism, and others, wholly to disbelieve it, without either hearing a Baptist preach, or conversing with any of them upon the subject. You know, Sir, and many of your brethren in the ministry know, how many in your churches have been tried on this point. If you have had nothing of it among the people of your charge, you have escaped better than your brethren in general. We are not unacquainted with your jealousies and fears on this head, nor of the evidence they furnish in favour of our sentiments.

Considering the "high solemnity" under which you profess to write, I freely confess, Sir, it is with a degree of astonishment that I have perused your next paragraph. I can hardly conceive it possible, that you should more grossly misrepresent our known and avowed sentiments than you have done. "Many," say you, "within my knowledge, have been the instances of persons under serious awakenings, whose attention has been turned by the preaching or conversation of Antipædobaptists, from subjects the most intimately connected with their eternal salvation, to the subject of *going into the water*, as if this were of the first and highest concernment." You further add, "Many are the instances of persons in these solemn circumstances, to whom representations have been made,

as if *by going into the water, they would immediately* FIND PEACE."

In reply to this injurious statement, we will only say, that we never heard such a sentiment advanced by a Baptist; and we feel safe in challenging the world to bring a single instance where any person acknowledged as a Baptist has avowed such a sentiment. And, Sir, (you will excuse the plainness) I must tell you, that you certainly know that your representation is not only different from, but in the very face of our known sentiments and constant practice. Nay more, should any person apply for baptism, under the false immpression, that "by going into the water they would immediately find peace," I am bold to say, that no minister of our denomination could be found, who would administer to such a person. The very mentioning of such a motive would be a sufficient objection to their being admitted. It is true, we do not pretend to know the heart, and hence may possibly baptize such as are not truly converted. But, Sir, to say that we represent to persons under serious awakenings, "that *by going into the water* they will find immediate peace," is as distant from any thing known to us, as matter of fact, as light is from darkness.

Could an instance be found, (which, with all due deference to your character, I must say, I very much doubt) in which a person had been persuaded *into the water* in expectation of "*finding immediate peace*," it would still be insufficient to justify your charge, which is made in very general terms, as though this were our usual practice. But is it not an *avowed sentiment* with many of your denomination, that it is the duty of all persons seriously inclined, (and are not some urged who are not very serious) to come up to all the ordinances? But Sir, we utterly discard the sentiment, by whomsoever advocated. Were a minister of our denomination to adopt such a sentiment, he would be immediately disowned by us; and if even a private Christian were found guilty of such imprudent conduct, he would be subjected to severe reproof.

When the foregoing charge against the Baptists was first advanced in your Discourses, I thought it my duty

to repel it, and call on you for proof. This I did in a manner which left no room to doubt but that you would either honourably retract the sentiment, as merely resting on report, or support it by sufficient testimony. But——you have done neither: and yet you continue the *slanderous charge*, and "solemnly declare that you believe it to be true!" I as "solemnly" declare that I believe it to be wholly unfounded. It is impossible for me to believe otherwise, without proof. If the charge you have brought against us, and still persist in, without producing any kind of proof, when called upon by the sacred principles of honour and religion, does not amount to *slander* in the common acceptation of the word, the public will do you justice. To that tribunal I cheerfully submit the decision.

Your remarks upon what I said in reply to your charge against the Baptists, of "delusion," in pretending to *follow Christ* in his baptism, by supposing that we might with as much propriety, undertake to "fast forty days in the wilderness, or ride on an ass to Jerusalem," &c. are too trifling to require a serious answer. I would just observe, however, that in introducing this paragraph, instead of giving my sentiment fairly, you have added a word by which my meaning is wholly perverted. You are pleased to say, "Christ's baptism, as you yourself acknowledge, was undoubtedly of an import *altogether* different from that which he afterwards instituted for his followers." By adding the word "altogether," you have given a meaning widely different from what I conveyed. To differ in *some* respects, and to be *altogether* different, cannot mean the same thing: the former is the utmost that can be inferred from my statement.

Although this Letter is already extended to an unusual length, I must beg your indulgence while I notice one other topic of argument, which you have thought proper to employ, in vindication of your treatment of the Baptists. I refer to the use which you inform the public we make of the word "persecution."

In the beginning of the Letter which I am answering, you implicitly tell the public, that I have "denounced your serious representations, as bitter 'invectives,' and

the effusions of a 'persecuting' spirit." In the closing part, you explain and apply your meaning. "It is not an uncommon thing," say you, "for people when pressed with argument, or with clear exposure of their errors, to cry out—'Persecution!' This they find a very convenient way to parry the force of argument, and to awaken in their favour a popular sympathy." And add, "This, Sir, give me leave to say, you appear very perfectly to understand." I have no doubt, Sir, but on reading this, your friends have exclaimed with one voice, Mirabile dictu!

Considering the solemnity under which you profess to write, will it not astonish even your Pædobaptist brethren, when I solemnly assure them, that as "perfectly as I understand" this business, *I have never in a single instance availed myself of such a refuge as this*, in order to "parry off the force of your arguments." No, Sir, the thought never entered my heart; nor have I found your arguments so very pressing, as to require such a subterfuge in order to escape them.

I do not recollect to have used the word but once in the whole of my animadversions upon your Discourse; and then I borrowed it from you, and was specially careful to give you credit for it. The sentence stands thus, 'Without' "displaying any thing like a spirit of persecution, or even of uncharitableness," (see page 78) 'Mr. Worcester proceeds to say,' &c.* Here, Sir, I brought into view the word *persecution*, merely because I could not give the sentence complete without. But did you not perceive, and must it not be obvious to every person who has read my book, that it was not the word "persecution," but "uncharitableness" *alone* which I animadverted upon, and for the sake of which I quoted the sentence? Yet, Sir, you have the assurance to tell the public, (while complaining of us for making "inroads upon your churches," and triumphing in the spoils which we bear off) "no sooner" say you, "do we attempt any defence of ourselves, and what we believe to be the cause of truth and of God, than you *immediately resort* to the cry of '*persecution!*'" Will you be so good, Sir, as to point out the instance?

* App. p. 293, 294.

I must think, Sir, whenever you will permit yourself calmly to review the ground on which you were led to make this *unwarrantable* assertion, that you will feel the most pungent conviction, that in your zeal to support your cause, you have most shockingly perverted the sentiments of your opponent.

From the manner in which you have introduced one of your remarks on this point, I conjecture you might have reference to an observation in my address to the Baptists, in the last page of my book. In noticing the treatment of Roger Williams, who in the dead of winter was banished from the Massachusetts, and driven over to the Savages, and forbid, on pain of death, to return! I indeed styled him our '*persecuted* Ancestor.' *This thing was not done in a corner.* Was this, Sir, persecution, or was it not? If *this*, together with the numerous instances which annually occur, wherein the Baptists suffer imprisonment, or the *spoiling of their goods*, for refusing to pay to the support of religious teachers from whom they conscientiously dissent, are the *kind of arguments* with which you "attempt to defend yourselves," it would not be surprising if we should "resort to the cry of *persecution*." *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad.** Whatever complaints we make of the foregoing treatment, we never have considered your *fair arguments* as persecution.

I now take leave of your XXIII[d] Letter, in which your *modest Reviewer* tells the public, Mr. Worcester "repels the charges of Dr. B. in a manly and dispassionate style, which, if arguments or facts could avail, we should think would go far towards making the Doctor repent that he is an author."† These "facts and arguments" have now been briefly noticed, and an impartial public will judge how far they are calculated to produce the above repentance.

I am, dear Sir,

Respectfully your's, &c.

* Eccl. vii. 7. † Mass Mag. vol. v.

LETTER XXIV.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE, at length, arrived at your closing Letter, on which I hasten to make a few remarks, and then propose to take my leave of you for the present.

You inform us, that, in your Discourses, you "had occasion to state, that the Anabaptists, or Antipædobaptists, are a sect of *modern* date; that they had their origin some time after the reformation under Luther and Calvin." Were we to admit this statement to be correct, (which, however, is far from it) would it conclude against us any more than against you? Can you trace *your origin* any further back than the reformation by Luther, without going into the papal communion in its most corrupt state? And if considered as a distinct denomination of Pædobaptists, is not your sect of a much later date than ours? If our being a "*modern sect*" is an argument that we are not right, then your being a *more* modern sect, is an argument still stronger that you are not right. If the dissenting of the German Anabaptists from Luther proves them to be wrong, will not the dissenting of your ancestors from the church of England, equally prove them to be wrong? The fact is, those called Anabaptists at the time of the reformation, dissented from Luther upon the same principles which he dissented from the Pope: i. e. because they thought he did not reform all that was amiss in that corrupt church.

You proceed, though with much seeming reluctance to say, "Unpleasant as the fact is, it ought not to be *dissembled*, that the history of your denomination is easily traced back to the German Anabaptists, who *first* made their appearance at Munster about the year 1522, and which, by their wild irregularities, gave so much trouble to Luther and his worthy associates; but further back than this it cannot be traced." These, my dear Sir, are bold assertions, which are much easier made than proved. Were you to attempt to trace the history of the English or American Baptists back to the German Anabaptists,

believe you would be as much puzzled to find the "links" by which they were ever united, as we should be to prove our descent from the churches of *Piedmont*. But, Sir, let us suppose the worst, that we really did originate from the "*Madmen of Munster*;" and that the other reformed churches originated from the corrupt, persecuting church of Rome, which, to say the least, is equally true; and what have you more to boast of than we? Our churches are as unlike to those "*German fanatics*," both in principle and practice, as your's are to the papal church. On the whole, we have much reason to felicitate ourselves that our history stands so fair, that during the space of almost three hundred years, nothing can be found with which we may be justly reproached. Such has been the peaceable, orderly walk of our churches, that no instance of disloyalty or rebellion against civil authority, nor any act of persecution towards those who dissent from us, can be laid to our charge.

But, Sir, if your cause derives any advantage from the repetition of this ghostly story of Munster, we certainly would not wish you to "dissemble," for the sake of sparing our feelings: for after the *hints* which you have given, we have nothing to fear from the remainder. It should be remembered, however, that every story has *two* sides to it.

As neither your readers nor mine have all of them the advantage of examining ecclesiastical history for themselves, it may be proper to subjoin a sketch from Dr. Mosheim, who will not be thought very partial to our denomination. This will show, how different his views of the origin of this people were from your's.

"The true origin," saith he, "of that sect which acquired the denomination of *Anabaptists*, by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over to their communion, and derived that of *Mennonites*, from the famous man to whom they owe the greatest part of their present felicity, IS HID IN THE REMOTEST DEPTHS OF ANTIQUITY; and is of consequence extremely difficult to be ascertained." No, says Mr. Worcester, it can be "easily traced back to the German Anabaptists, but further back than this it cannot be traced." This,

to be sure, was "the remotest depths of antiquity."* —"This uncertainty," continues the Doctor, "will not appear surprising, when it is considered, that *this sect started up*, all of a sudden, in *several countries*, at the SAME POINT OF TIME, under leaders of different talents, and different intentions, and at the VERY PERIOD when the first contests of the Reformers with the Roman pontiffs drew the attention of the world, and employed the pens of the learned, in such a manner as to render all other objects and incidents matters of indifference."

"The modern *Mennonites*," continues this author, "not only consider themselves as the descendants of the *Waldenses*, who were so *grievously oppressed* and *persecuted* by the despotic heads of the Roman church; but pretend, moreover, to be the PUREST *offspring* of these respectable sufferers; being equally averse to all principles of rebellion, on the one hand, and all suggestions of fanaticism on the other."

"Their *adversaries*, on the contrary, represent them as the descendants of those turbulent and furious Anabaptists, who, in the sixteenth century, involved Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and more especially the province of Westphalia, in such scenes of blood, perplexity and distress."

"After having examined these two different accounts," (continues the same writer,) "of the origin of the Anabaptists, with the utmost attention and impartiality, I have found that neither of them is exactly conformable to truth."

"It may be observed in the first place, that the Mennonites† are not *entirely mistaken* when they boast of their descent from the *Waldenses*, *Petrobrussians*, and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as *witnesses of the truth* in times of *universal darkness* and superstition. *Before* the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed, in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in *Bohemia*, *Moravia*, *Switzerland*, and *Germany*, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites, and Hussites had

* Dr. Mosheim lived within 200 years of this period.

† Or *Anabaptists*; for he considers them one.

maintained, some in a more disguised, and some in a more open manner, viz: *That the kingdom of* CHRIST, *or the visible church he had established upon earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressors.* This maxim is the true source of all the peculiarities that are to be found in the religious *doctrine* and *discipline* of the *Mennonites.*"*

Who does not see in the above, the exact creed of the modern Baptists? If the church be "*an assembly of* TRUE AND REAL *saints*," then, according to your sentiments, it could not admit infants; for you do not believe them to be such.

But, Sir, the most remarkable article in this part of your Letter, is, your attempt to make Dr. Gill acknowledge, that "from the eleventh century back to the fourth, he was not able to find one instance of an opposer to infant baptism." In a note at the bottom of the page you are pleased to say, "Had Mr. Merrill turned to the 26th page of Dr. Gill's Answer to Mr. Clark he might have spared himself the trouble of denying that Dr. Gill had ever made this concession, and of charging me with falsehood in the case."

I have Dr. Gill's Answer now open before me; but being a different edition, I cannot turn to the page to which you refer. I presume, however, the passage is now under my eye. In this, Dr. Gill, adopting it as the language of his opponent, says; "It is *observed* that a large stride is taken by me from the *eleventh* to the *fourth* century, not being able in the space of more than six hundred years to find one instance of an opposer of infant baptism." These are not Dr. Gill's words, but Mr. Clark's inference. Nor can we perceive that he concedes to their correctness. For after assigning the reasons for there being so few opposers, during that period, he adds, "yet there *were some* in the valleys of *Piedmont* EVEN FROM THE TIMES OF THE APOSTLES, AND DURING THIS INTERVAL, as learned men have observed, that

* Vol. iv. Vid. article Anabaptists.

bore their testimony against corruptions in doctrine and practice; among which, this of infant baptism must be one." The passage to which Mr. Clark refers, I suppose to be the following: after showing that there was nothing in the writings of the two first centuries, in favour of infant baptism, the Doctor adds, "the truth of the matter is, that infant baptism was moved for in the third century, got footing and establishment in the fourth and fifth; and so prevailed until the time of the reformation. Though, throughout these several centuries, there were testimonies borne to adult baptism; and, at several times, certain persons rose up and opposed infant baptism."* The public will now judge how far Dr. Gill has conceded the point which you contend.

If, Sir, there were none who opposed infant baptism from the fourth to the eleventh century, how shall we account for the repeated decrees of councils during this period, against such opposers? One article of the council of Mela, held in the fifth century, is in the following words; "Also it is the pleasure of the bishops to order, that whosoever denieth that infants newly born of their mothers are to be baptized; or saith that baptism is administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin derived from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, *be (anathema) accursed.*" The first part of this decree, clearly supposes that some denied that infants newly born were to be baptized. And the latter, that others, as the Pelagians, denied that baptism could wash away original sin.

Again, in the sixth century, by the Council of Lerida, in the archbishopric of Tarragona, it was decreed, "that such as had fallen into the prevarication of *anabaptism*, if they should return to the church, should be received as the Council of Nice had enacted."† Indeed the first ecclesiastical canon in Europe for the baptism of babes, I believe was passed in the year 514, by a council composed of a few Spanish bishops, "who met at Girona in Catalonia, and framed and subscribed ten rules of dis-

* Sermons and Tracts in two vols. Lond. edit. quarto, p. 270, 4to.

† Concilius Ilerdense. An. DXXIV. Can. ix. De his qui in prevaricatione rebaptizati.

pline." The fourth is an agreement "to baptize Catechumens only at Easter and Pentecost, except in cases of sickness." In the fifth they agreed, "in case infants were ill, and would not suck their mother's milk, if they were offered, to baptize them, even though it were the day they were born." This agreement was binding only on such as assented to it.

But Charlemagne carried the subject still further, and in A. D. 789 passed a law to compel his subjects, on pain of death, to be baptized themselves! And "by heavy fines obliged them, to baptize their children within the year of their birth."*

Taking these things into consideration, and is it at all surprising, that such as dared to think for themselves during these years of Antichristian darkness and terror, should keep concealed? But no sooner was there a prospect of successful opposition to papal corruption, than "they started up, all of a sudden, in several countries at the same point of time, under leaders of different talents and intentions."

We do not consider ourselves obliged to shew where the true church was, during what is called the dark ages, any more than you are. But one thing we are free to say, we have no disposition to acknowledge the corrupt, tyrannical, bloody church of Rome, as the true church of Christ, for the sake of relieving the difficulty. If you are disposed to own *that* as the church of God, merely because it practised infant baptism, you are entirely welcome to every advantage which such a relation will afford you. Although Christ has assured us, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church*; yet he has taught us with equal certainty, to expect a *departure from the faith*; and that the day of Christ should not come, *except there should come a falling away first, and that* MAN OF SIN *be revealed, the son of perdition*. This was undoubtedly the period to which Christ alluded, when he said, *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.*

Much of your reasoning, Sir, in this as well as in most of your other Letters, goes upon the supposition, that the

* *Alberti Crantzii*, Saxonia Coloniæ, In Robinson.

church, for two thousand years before Abraham, and for about the same time after, before the coming of Christ; and for fifteen hundred years from the commencement of the Christian dispensation, was decidedly a Pædobaptist church. Nothing, however, can be further from the truth than such a supposition. There are no more traces of a *visible church* from Adam to Abraham, than are to be found among those who were called *heretics* during the dark reign of Antichrist. That a large body of people, with the Pope at their head, were in the practice of infant baptism at the time of the reformation, and who called themselves the only true church of Christ, will not be denied. But I have always supposed, that Protestants denied their claim. If there were any other Pædobaptist church before the reformation, you can undoubtedly tell us where it was.

It is true, Sir, that we cannot admit, what you call the lateness of our origin, and smallness of our numbers, as an argument of any great weight against our peculiar sentiments. The first we consider as wholly without proof, and the last without force. For if the smallness of our numbers, compared with you, will destroy the credibility of our being the true followers of Christ, then the smallness of the number of the Protestants, compared with the papal church, will equally prove against their peculiar sentiments.

I had occasion in my Appendix to remark, that 'it has often been urged as an argument in favour of the Christian religion, that it made its way at first against the learning, power, and policy of the world, by the instrumentality of a few illiterate fishermen.' 'Does not this argument,' I asked, 'cast its full weight into the scale in favour of our distinguishing sentiments, if the observation of our brethren respecting us be just?' "So, then," you exclaim, "the whole body of Christian professors, opposed to your *distinguishing sentiments*, are to be accounted as the world!" A very extraordinary conclusion! Did I say a single word about the great body of Christian professors? Or, do you consider all the world as belonging to this body? This is not the first instance in which you have endeavoured to make it appear that I have been want-

ing in a spirit of candour. And notwithstanding I said the '*world*,' you have gone on insisting that, by this expression, your churches were intended. And as though this were not sufficiently severe, you have coupled it with the word "Antichrist," as used by Mr. Merrill. The public will judge whether this is treating your opponent fairly.

In my closing address to my brethren, I did indeed say, '*Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*' "This unquestionably," say you, "is the distinctive and exclusive characteristic of the true people and church of God." I hope, Sir, you will then in future allow, that we have some claim to the character of the *true people of God*.

In the above statement, you may rest assured I had no reference to your "fair scriptural arguments," as the source of our sufferings; but to another kind of *logic*, which has often been employed against the Baptists, and which I stated "in language sufficiently explicit," to be understood.

Your quotations from Mr. Merrill I am not in the least concerned to answer; nor do I consider myself accountable for any particular expressions which he has thought proper to use.

You proceed in a very impassioned manner to inquire, "Where, Sir, was your denomination, where your Antipædobaptist church, during the four thousand years which preceded the coming of Messiah?" Truly, Sir; and where was your Pædobaptist church during this period? All the Patriarchs, beyond a doubt, were Pædobaptists, although Pædobaptism had never been heard of! Noah and his family are mentioned by the Apostle Peter as having unintentionally passed through a kind of *figurative baptism*: but then, unfortunately for you, it was so ordered that no infants were included in this baptism. Had there been a single infant in the ark, I have no doubt it would have been considered as decisive proof in favour of Pædobaptism.

But you proceed to ask, "Where was your Antipædobaptist church in the primitive ages after Christ, when no one was ever known or heard of, who denied infant

baptism?" Permit me, Sir, to ask, Where was your *Pædobaptist church* during the TIME OF CHRIST *and his Apostles*, when no one instance can be found of the baptism of an infant?

You go on to make the same inquiries from the fourth to the eleventh century, and again quote what you call Dr. Gill's concession. I have already shown the incorrectness of this statement.

That Pædobaptism very generally prevailed during this period, I believe no Baptist will deny. But no regular succession of it can be traced, but in a church with which, I should suppose you would not be very proud of claiming relation.

But, Sir, your next interrogatory presents a very curious specimen of Pædobaptist succession. "Where was your Antipædobaptist church in the days of the reformation, when Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Zuinglius, with their intrepid coadjutors, beat down the bulwarks of Antichrist, and carried terror and dismay to the very seat of the beast?" Pray, Sir, who do you mean by Antichrist? Was it not the Pædobaptist church of Rome? And by the beast, do you not mean the triple-crowned bishop at the head of that church? And was there any other Pædobaptist church in existence at that time?

Your management in these inquiries, is in perfect character with the rest of your book. You have been careful to mention the four thousand years which preceded the coming of Christ, when we do not pretend that there was any Baptist church, in any proper sense, in existence. You then very cautiously step over the *only period* in which we have any infallible history of the gospel church, and ask, "Where was your Antipædobaptist church in the primitive ages *after* Christ, when no one was ever known or heard of, who denied infant baptism?" Why not ask, "where was it in the days of Christ and the Apostles," *when no one ever heard of an infant's being baptized?* At this period, Sir, a church of baptized believers stands confessed on the *sacred pages*; and not the least intimation of a single infant "connected" with it. It is said, *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto*

*him the plagues that are written in this book.** Again you make a very long stride from the eleventh century to the sixteenth. How happens it that you make no inquiries after the "Antipædobaptist church" during this period? Were you apprehensive you would be pointed to the vallies of *Piedmont?* To the WALDENSES, and PETROBRUSSIANS? Antipædobaptism was undoubtedly too manifest during this period, to answer your purpose. Your prudence in passing it over in silence cannot be impeached.

Again you ask, "Where was your Antipædobaptist church, in the times of the bloody persecutions which succeeded the reformation, when millions of faithful confessors, in different parts of Europe, laid down their lives *for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ?*" If the Baptists, Sir, did not share so largely in the honours of persecution, we are happy to know, that they were never found in the ranks of the persecutors. But it may be asked, By whom were these "*intrepid reformers*" persecuted? If I can understand your argument, it must be answered—By that very church, which, with all its corruptions, you consider as the *pillar and ground of the truth*, from the rise of Antichrist until the reformation by Luther commenced! Yes, Sir, from the days of Constantine to the present, the greater part by far who have suffered martyrdom, or have been otherwise persecuted, have suffered by those of the "*Pædobaptist faith.*" Pray, Sir, do not complain; your persecutions have come from that very church from which you seem proud to claim your descent.

"Where in fine," you ask, "was your Antipædobaptist church, when our pious and venerable ancestors abandoned their native country, and, surmounting all the difficulties of the ocean and of the wilderness, heroically planted the standard of the cross in this new world? In that glorious enterprize it had no share."

I trust, Sir, I sufficiently venerate the memory of those pious men; nor would I willingly disturb their ashes. But is it not an affecting evidence of the power of prejudice, and of the weakness of human nature, that they should have supposed that this western continent was made exclusively for Pædobaptists? Is it not perfectly

* Rev. xx. 18.

astonishing, that men who had conceived such just and enlarged notions of civil and religious liberty, should ever have thought they were doing God service, by hanging the Quakers, and banishing the Baptists, who only wished to enjoy equal privileges with themselves?

Your following observations are in the same strain, and as little to the point, as they all go upon this supposition, that I have denied that Pædobaptists make any part of the true church of God; a supposition wholly without foundation. I have, in my former publication, in the most unequivocal manner, stated the contrary: hence it is to no purpose for you to conjure up this *man of straw*, for the sake of showing how adroitly you can beat him.

In view of your preceding remarks, you proceed to say; "at any rate I envy not your situation." I am sensible, Sir, our situation is not very enviable to such as are seeking worldly power and grandeur. Many of our societies are small and poor; and I am sorry to have occasion to add, that in many instances they are exceedingly oppressed by your denomination, by being compelled to pay to the support of ministers from whom they have conscientiously dissented. Yes, Sir, you cannot be ignorant, that even in this enlightened State, scarce a year rolls round, without witnessing some instances of this kind of oppression. The members of our societies are still dragged to prison, or their goods sold at public auction, for the support of ministers whom they conscientiously refuse to hear.

You are pleased to call the present an "age of delusion and error;" but as it respects this country, I trust it will be acknowledged, that it is *an age* of uncommon mercy. There have been probably more revivals of religion in this land, and more general efforts made both here and throughout the whole Christian world for the spread of the gospel, than at any former period.

But you seem determined by some means or other to carry your point. At one time, you argue against the correctness of our sentiments, from the "smallness of our numbers;" and if we greatly "*increase*," it gives you not the least impression in our favour: this is what

"you have been taught to expect, that in these *last* and *perilous times*, errors of all kinds will prevail." At another time you reproach us with having done so little for the promotion of "the cause of truth and religion:" and if we make any uncommon exertions, then you are ready to accuse us of a spirit of proselytism.

In the first ages of Christianity, when it was unaided by worldly power, it made its way wholly by its own intrinsic evidence. Its gaining ground under these circumstances, has ever been considered as one of the most unanswerable arguments in its favour. In applying this mode of reasoning to us, you are pleased to say; "So far then from considering *your increase*, in this period of the world, as an evidence in your favour, I really consider it as holding a place among the many evidences against you." Is this any proof of the matter? You further add, I expect you *will* increase, as I expect other *erroneous* denominations to increase, until a brighter day than the present shall dawn upon the church and the world." You may rest assured, we have nothing to fear, but every thing to hope, from such a day as that.

I rejoice with you, Sir, "in the confidence, that Christ still reigns upon the holy hill of Zion." Not indeed the old *Jewish hill* of Zion; but the *Mount-Zion* of the gospel, to which the believing Hebrews were come.* The church "which from the beginning God was graciously pleased to *set as a seal upon his heart*," I should really imagine embraced something more than the Pædobaptist communion. To all the blessings and privileges of this sacred Mount, my heart, Sir, most sincerely bids you welcome.

I blame you not for censuring what you deem to be erroneous in the Baptists; but I cannot excuse you for charging us with what we have solemnly and uniformly disavowed, and for persisting in the ungenerous accusation, after being challenged to exhibit the proof.†

With peculiar pleasure I reciprocate your professions of friendship to our denomination. If indeed you "most sacredly cherish and cultivate the spirit of brotherly kindness towards those of our denomination, (and I trust,

* Heb. xii. 22. † See App. p. 298.

say you, there are many) who really love our Lord Jesus Christ, and are sincerely, though under a misguided influence, seeking the honour of his name, and the advancement of his cause." "This spirit," you add, "I have ever professed, and this spirit, as my people will bear me witness, I have ever, both in public and in private, endeavoured to promote." While reading these tender expressions, I almost forget that you have ever said an unpleasant thing against me, or the Baptists, and really imagine that we are still brethren. I cannot, I will not entertain a sentiment, so derogatory to your honour as a man of piety, and so utterly subversive of the laws of Christian charity, as to apply to you the following observation, which I am pained to state, I met with before I had finished the 7th page of your book. "PROFESSIONS, *indeed, you have been pleased to* ADVANCE MANY; *and they will all, I trust, be duly appreciated.*"

I hasten, Sir, to correct a mistake of yours, which I find on your last page but one. "From several *intimations* in your book, as well as in Mr. Merrill's," say you, "the uninformed public might be led to conclude, that there had been a great falling away of my people to your denomination; that those who remain are in a wavering, unsettled state." Sir, you have totally mistaken me. I have not designedly "*intimated*" any such thing. I had not the least reference to your *particular charge*, in any thing which I said; but to 'your brethren' of the Pædobaptist persuasion. "Intimations of this sort," I did not make without sufficient reasons; but they were not meant to apply particularly to your church.

I am happy to learn that your health is restored and confirmed. I pray God to have you in his holy keeping, and that your health may never more be impaired, by fruitlessly attempting to defend error. Should you think yourself called upon to reply to these Letters, I beseech you, before you commence the work, to reflect seriously, whether you are not actually opposing the blessed Jesus in his own institution; and whether, in the end, you may not be found even to fight against God.

If what I have written should produce no conviction in your mind, nor in the minds of your brethren, of the

inconclusiveness of your arguments, in support of infant baptism, I know of nothing which I could lay before you, which would be likely to have that effect. My present thought therefore, is, that I shall write no more upon the subject. But I know not how duty may appear hereafter. I consider myself the servant of the church for Christ's sake.

Though conscious of much imperfection, in the manner in which I have conducted my side of the controversy, I have the fullest confidence that the cause which I have endeavoured to defend, is TRUTH, and therefore will finally prevail. To the blessing of Almighty God, I humbly commend these feeble efforts; praying that he would succeed them for the pulling down of error, and for the establishment of apostolic order and purity in all the churches.

In writing the preceding Letters, I have been frequently interrupted, sometimes for weeks, and sometimes for months, in which I have not written a single line; and even now I have not read the whole in connexion: hence I think it probable there may be some repetitions. For these, and all other philological inaccuracies, I solicit the indulgence of a candid public.

It is my fervent prayer, that the time may soon come *when the watchmen shall see eye to eye*, and when they shall lift up their voice *together*; when that spirit of intolerance and bigotry, so prejudicial to the interests of religion, shall be succeeded by an enlightened, liberal, and evangelical philanthropy; when that *charity* which seeketh not her own, which *vaunteth* not itself, which doth not behave *unseemly*, which rejoiceth only in the truth, —shall universally prevail. That you, dear Sir, may have the honour of contributing to the promotion of these glorious objects, and the happiness of seeing their complete accomplishment, is the sincere wish of, Rev. Sir, your affectionate friend and fellow-labourer in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,

THOMAS BALDWIN.

Boston, July 1, 1810.

POSTSCRIPT.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED a Letter from your Rev. Brother at Thorn... in the fall of 1807, complaining of my having published an... edition of my *Reply* to him, without correcting several th... which he considered as misrepresentations. To this Letter ... turned an answer a few weeks after; in which it was sugge... that, in my reply to you, some further notice might be take... the subjects of which he complained. Having already assig... my reasons* for not publicly noticing his "Candid Discussio... &c. I have only room briefly to notice what in his second secti... entitled, "*Misrepresentations detected and improved.*"

In this Section the four following things are noticed. 1. ... page 120 of my Reply, he quotes me as saying, 'If I am ... much mistaken, you make this honest confession, that *the sc... ture as to infant baptism is* SILENT!' Upon this he rema... "The passage in my Letter upon which you grounded this ... resentation, was this, "And the *silence of scripture* about ... men's partaking at the Lord's table is as good evidence that ... did not partake, as the *silence* of scripture respecting the bap... of infants is against their being baptized." "My words," s... he, "by no fair construction, could imply that the scriptures ... *more* silent with regard to *infant baptism*, than they are ... regard to *women's partaking at the Lord's table.*" To th... reply, I really thought it was *his* meaning, and I still thin... words imply, that the scripture was entirely silent in both c... I also knew this to be a favourite argument with Pædobap...

After reading his remarks, the public will deduct as much ... my argument, as his explanation may entitle him fairly to ex...

2. In my Piece to which the Friendly Letter was written i... ply, in order to show the *practice* of the apostolic church, I ... ted Acts ii. 42, of which Mr. W. complained that "such a m... od of quoting scripture is calculated to mislead the ignorant ... inattentive." To this I answered, 'If to be conformed to th... postle's doctrine, and continuing stedfastly in it, be a dange... *practice*, and "calculated to mislead the ignorant and inatten... we should be glad to see the danger pointed out.' To this ... W. replies, "It was not against conformity to the Apostle's ... trine, but to your method of quoting scripture, that I made ... objection." My "method of quoting scripture," in this inst... is the method used by all other writers. I quoted the passa... show, what was the Apostle's practice at this early perio... in my remarks there be any thing which gives an unjust r... sentation of Mr. W.'s real meaning, I readily retract it.

3. In my animadversion upon the seventh part of his Fri... Letter, he charges me with "substituting *sentiments* for ... *ment.*" By "sentiment," he meant, as I now understand ... our *sentiment of particular communion.* Whereas, I treate... subject, as he supposes, as though he meant our 'sentiments ... erally. From the manner in which he argued, I certainly su... ed, notwithstanding his first statement, he meant our sentime... Baptists. Although I am now satisfied it was not his meani...

* See Letter I. of this work.

stating his argument; yet as he reasoned frequently from other premises, I cannot perceive that I have in the smallest degree misrepresented his real argument. My remarks were not predicated on the supposed misrepresentations; but on his observations upon our *mode* of baptizing by immersion. In proof of this, I will add two or three sentences from his book, and the public will judge. "I have thought," saith he, "that you lay an undue stress upon it (baptism) or at least on your *particular mode*. I verily fear that with many, *a change in sentiment* in favour of your opinion, has been allowed great weight as an evidence of a *real change of heart*." It cannot be pretended here that Mr. W. uses the word "sentiment," with reference to *particular communion*, but to immersion. Again, "Sinners at such seasons," (i. e. times of special revival) "will, like drowning persons, catch at *straws* for their support; and if they can be made to believe, that a willingness to be *baptized by immersion*, is an evidence of a right temper, they will naturally comply, and that without the least self-denial."

Once more. In the 46th page of the Friendly Letter, is the following; "Here," saith he, "I would beg leave to suggest a query, without any design to reproach. May it not be owing to the manner in which *some* preachers of your denomination have treated the *subject of baptism*," (not close communion) "that so many professors of your denomination have turned *Deists, Shakers, Universalists*," *&c.* It was upon this strain of argument, I was led to say '*Pandora's fatal box* could scarcely contain more evils than you attribute to immersion.'

If, in the preceding remarks, Mr. W. did not refer to our manner of baptizing, rather than to our particular communion, I confess I am incapable of understanding plain English.

If, after all, a candid public can see that I have made any undue advantage from mistaking his meaning in saying "sentiment," instead of '*sentiments*,' they will make such deduction as they think proper, and I presume I shall be satisfied.

In the fourth and last place Mr. W. charges me with "emphasizing" a passage differently from what he had done; and of course, making an inference he is unwilling to grant.

As Mr. W. emphasized some words differently from what I did, I will now state the passage, together with my remarks upon it, without emphasising a single word, and the public will judge whether my inference were just or not. "Granting," saith Mr. W. "that immersion be the appointed mode of baptism, and believers the only proper subjects, yet if a Pædobaptist really think otherwise, and with an obedient heart, offers up his children in our mode, his conduct is not chargeable with any moral evil.——And the person in so doing, is as well accepted in the sight of God, as if his external conduct had been according to the appointed mode of baptism." To this I replied; 'According to the above argument, all that is necessary to render baptism acceptable, is only to really think you are right.' In both cases, the words will now speak for themselves and the public, I have no doubt, will give an impartial decision; to which I confidently refer the subject. And am respectfully your's, as above.